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### DEATH STROLLS IN FLAMINGO PARK

MYSTERY MIKE SHAYNE

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by BRETT HALLIDAY

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# MIKE SHAYNE



## MYSTERY MAGAZINE

NOV, 1973  
VOL. 33, NO. 6

### NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL DEATH STROLLS IN FLAMINGO PARK by BRETT HALLIDAY

*It began as a simple case of kidnapping when famed starlet Mona Drew disappeared. George Silver, her agent, was torn between the good publicity and concern for his young client. Then Michael Shayne entered the case and found himself caught between the agent and the ruthless kidnappers' demands. If he fouled this one up, it would mean death for Miss Drew—and Shayne!*

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# DEATH STROLLS IN FLAMINGO PARK

by **BRETT HALLIDAY**

**THE NEW MIKE SHAYNE COMPLETE SHORT NOVEL**

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**GEORGE SILVER** escorted **Mona Drew** in the style to which they had become accustomed. They walked the macadam of the shadowed supper club parking lot on quick steps, moving along behind the rows of parked vehicles, Silver keeping an eye out for obstacles.

Mona wouldn't shatter like a priceless vase if she were to stumble and fall, but he was taking precautions with his prize. He opened the door of

the polished rent car and put her on the front seat.

"You want the window down, baby?"

"Yes, please. It is a lovely evening."

"You like Miami?"

She did not comment as he made sure she was seated properly. She wore a pale green pant suit, the color enhancing the reddish tint of her hair and the suit enhancing the pampered curves of her lean body and long legs. She easily had been



*"Eleven o'clock," the man told Mike Shayne "Bring the dough—or you'll have a very dead Hollywood star on your hands!"*



the most attractive woman inside the small club.

She had wanted anonymity; it was why they were staying at the out-of-the-way motel, why they had come to The Anchor. She had wanted a quiet Sunday evening dinner away from the buzz of her neon life. But between natural beauty and her whims and manners, it had been impossible to remain anonymous, of course. Soon the word had wafted through the small supper club as if carried on the gentle Miami breeze.

"That's *Mona Drew* over there! The movie star! The Academy Award winner! Yes, the one in green! I'd recognize her anywhere, Ralph! I don't know who the man is, probably a bodyguard, or maybe a paid escort. But that's *Mona Drew*! She's making her next picture right here in Miami. I read it in the paper. Imagine! *Mona Drew* eating at The Anchor! I always thought movie stars ate at—"

"Maybe she's slumming, doll. This place, to her, must be like you'n me going to a hot dog bench on the beach."

"Imagine! Eating at The Anchor!"

"Or it could be she'd like to have a quiet meal."

"They tell me movie stars live on being seen in the right places, Ralph!"

"They tell me they don't get

tired of being recognized every time they turn around."

"I wouldn't! I think it'd be exciting to be recognized! Look! Look what that man is doing for her, Ralph! He's lighting her cigarette! I think I'd like to have a cigarette now, please."

"Here's the pack. There's a book of matches on the other side of your water glass."

George Silver closed the sedan door. The dashlight winked out. Mona now sat straight and tall in shadow. And then George remembered: "Hey—damn! I left my lighter on the table, baby! I'll be right back."

Mona crossed her knees and settled lower in the car seat. She felt comfortably full and relaxed. She had been recognized—it was the price—but the people had not pestered. Thank God for a small favor. She and George would have to return to The Anchor.

Suddenly Mona sensed danger and she bolted upright, pivoting her head to see. She gasped on the caped shadow that loomed outside the open car window. A hood hid the face of the shadow, but she saw quick movement. It was as if the caped figure was pitching something at her. She reflexively drew back her head. Not

enough. A liquid splattered her face.

Mona pitched forward with an agonized cry, slammed palms against her face in a too late protective move. The liquid was warm and sticky, skidded down her wrists in rivulets to slide along her forearms. She wanted to scream, but no sound came from her throat.

And then light surrounded her.

"Mona!" George Silver gasped. "What the hell happened? My God, Mona, you're covered with blood!"

She managed to open the car door. She doubled forward, hung her head outside. From far away she heard an excited voice: "Ralph, look! What's going on over there?"

"Even movie stars have to throw up once in a while, doll."

## II

MICHAEL SHAYNE wasn't sure he was going to like the worried man who occupied the client's chair that bright Monday morning. For one thing, George Silver had attempted to brush past Lucy Hamilton in the outer office as if Lucy did not exist. For another, Silver seemed an excitable person, a man too quick with opinions, the kind who would mix sheaf with grain indiscriminately.

"Look, Mike Shayne," said George Silver. "I gotta have you. I don't care what else you might be working on right now, drop it, man! I'll pay better than anything you've got in the fire."

"If I had something in the fire, Silver," said Shayne flatly, "you wouldn't have enough money to pull me off. But as it happens, I'm available. At least, I'll listen. That's after you apologize to Lucy."

"Who?"

"My secretary."

"Aw, come on, man—"

Shayne settled his huge, muscled body lower in the chair behind his desk and stared hard at the prospective client from gray eyes that went cold and became determined.

George Silver went into the outer office. Shayne heard mumbled words, then Silver returned. He was a medium-statured man with blond hair worn in a Marine cut, maybe in his mid-forties, garbed in casual clothing that had cost a bundle. He seemed comfortable in the checkered sports jacket, as if he were used to wearing coats. He was tieless, and he had a very large nose. He laid out his concern with short bursts of sentences and half sentences. It almost was as if his mouth would not function fast enough to keep up with his thoughts.

Shayne listened without interrupting, got the general drift behind the man's discomfort, and finally summarized: "Okay, Silver, you're Mona Drew's agent. She's in town, doing a film. You two went out to dinner last night, a place called The Anchor, you went back inside the joint to get a cigarette lighter, and while you were away from the car somebody came along and tossed what you say was blood on Mona Drew."

"Shayne, I still can't believe it happened!"

"Exactly what do you want from me today?"

"Protection for Mona!"

"You don't want me to find who attacked Miss Drew, and why? I'm an investigator, Mr. Silver."

"Yeah, yeah, that too. That'd be okay, if you could find out. But, mostly, I want protection for her. I don't want any more surprises. Shayne, she just about flipped out last night. All the way. She about went out of her tree. I had to burn the suit she was wearing!"

"How is she this morning?" the redhead asked.

"Sleeping. I finally got pills down her. She was sleeping like dead when I left her."

"Pills could make her dead."

"Naw, she was okay. Snoring. I checked her before I came

here. I wouldn't have left her if she was awake."

"You two sharing a room at this motel? What is it? The Palm Tree?"

"Nothing like that. We've got next door rooms, a connecting door. We're agent-actress. People-people. No more than that. It's always business. All business."

"Okay, let me get this straight. She was sitting in the passenger seat of the car. She was alone. You'd gone back into the club. Her window was down. And somebody in a cape and hood shows and tosses a liquid on her."

"Blood. It was blood, Shayne."

"This someone came out of nowhere."

"Yeah."

"Didn't say a word, just tossed."

"Yeah."

"Moved right in beside the car window and pitched."

"Yeah."

"Miss Drew saw this person too late to react."

"Yes."

"Car window down. It seems odd she didn't hear the approach."

"Maybe she did. I dunno. Maybe she thought it was me coming back to the car."

"Wouldn't you think that, out of natural curiosity, she

might have turned in the seat, looked?"

"She did, but it was too late."

"In fact, one might even think she would have seen movement in the corner of her eye since the attacker was so close."

"You're pressing for something, man," George Silver said suspiciously. "What?"

"Are you looking for publicity for your girl? I've got a pal, Tim Rourke, a reporter at the *Daily News*. Are you that sharp? Did you nose that out, set up this attack, come here this morning to hire me, knowing damn well that Rourke, sooner or later, would find his nose twitching?"

Silver looked irked. "Shayne, the name Mona Drew is enough these days. She won the Academy. She's a hot piece of property. Worth millions now. You may not understand, but we don't need gimmicks. All I'm trying to do is protect her. I've got an interest in her. I intend to protect that interest and her."

"In that order, Mr. Silver?"

"They go hand in hand, Shayne. I'm not handling her for kicks. I had her in the lean days, and now I've got her in the fat days. And she's not exactly Funsville. Not always. But she's got super-talent,



Shayne. She won the Academy, and that makes her worth protecting."

"I'm two hundred clams a day plus expenses for whatever it is you want me to do, Silver."

The agent took a wallet from inside the checked sports jacket and began thumbing out one hundred dollar bills.

"Four will do for the moment," said the detective.

"That's only today and tomorrow. Man, I may want—"

"Two days will let me decide if I want the job."

"Hey, man, I've got the bread!"

"So it appears. But I may not want to protect Mona Drew."

"Shayne, what the hell gives? I come in here, you're a

private eye, I wanna hire you, I've got the dinero. It ain't gonna be a tough job, not like you're gonna get shot at. It's just that—well, some crazy nut is tossin' blood on my baby and it's gotta stop. I mean, she could fall out of her tree! She could—"

"Is that how you've got it figured, Silver? Some parking lot nut was just cruising through the area, looking for someone to—"

"What else could it have been?"

"Last night was a warm evening. Most people don't run around in capes with hoods up on a warm evening unless that person doesn't want to be recognized. So maybe we can figure the attack was premeditated, maybe we can figure the attacker was not just some nut wandering through a supper club parking lot looking for kicks."

"Well—"

"Off the top of my head, Silver, I'm going to start by figuring someone doesn't like your Mona Drew. Perhaps someone who works with her. I'm going to figure someone followed you two to The Anchor last night. Is Mona Drew popular with her co-workers?"

Shayne arched a shaggy eyebrow on Silver's hesitation. "Not popular?"

"Look, man, she's special. That's what you don't understand. She's Academy. It makes a difference. The others—hell, they're jealous, that's all. Mona's got super-talent, and they've got—"

"Where are the others who are involved in this picture-making venture staying?"

"Miami Beach." George Silver named a posh hotel Shayne recognized.

"Does everybody over there know you and Mona are at the Palm Tree?"

"I suppose."

"So it would be no trick to pick up you two going out to dinner, trail you."

"No trick—with a bit of patience."

"You'd be surprised how patient some people can be under given circumstances, Silver," Shayne said.

The agent swiped at his nose. "Hey, last night is finished. It's today, tomorrow, the future I'm thinking about."

"And all you want me to do is keep people away from Mona Drew."

"That's it."

"Then you're a loser, pal."

"Huh?"

"It's simple," said Shayne with a shrug. "Somebody had a reason to attack. Anger, jealousy, vengeance, greed,—"

"Wait a sec!"



Shayne scowled heavily on the interruption.

"I don't need complications," said Silver. "I don't need a thinker. I need a body-guard. No more."

Shayne pushed the four one hundred dollar bills toward the agent. "So head down the street."

Silver sat unmoving, staring hard. It was as if he disbelieved.

Shayne said impatiently, "You're wasting my time."

"Look—"

"No, you look!" the detective said. "I'll take the job! But if I do I'm not going to sit around and brush off flies. I don't operate defensively, Silver. I'm going after the attacker. It's the only way to really protect the girl!"

Silver fumbled in his jacket pocket, brought out a crumpled package of cigarettes. He got out a bent cigarette, lit it with a jerk of a match against a book.

"I gotta walk," he said suddenly. "Okay if I walk?"

Shayne waved a hand.

Silver paced. "I gotta think," he said, taking rapid drags from the bent cigarette. He stopped once, looked at the detective. "Man, you do come on strong."

"Make a decision," Shayne said, keeping his tone just above a growl.

"Okay, okay." The agent turned into the desk again. "We

do it your way, man. Only I'd like to—"

"No onlys. I want to talk to Mona Drew. How soon will she be awake?"

"I dunno, maybe at noon. What do you want to talk to her about? I probably can answer any questions—"

"Silver," the redhead interrupted, his tone hard, "you may be used to talking for Mona Drew. But this is one time you're not going to be a spokesman. I want my answers from her."

Surprisingly, the agent clammed.

Shayne asked, "Will she be working today?"

"Not until Wednesday. Maybe not till Friday. I figure I'd talk to the director. He can shoot around her for a couple of extra days."

"I'll be at the Palm Tree at noon." Shayne gathered the four one hundred dollar bills. "Give these to my secretary on your way out."

Lucy Hamilton stepped into Shayne's doorway a few minutes later. She stood with her head cocked slightly, looking caught up in a combination of mild surprise and perhaps a bit of awe. "You're going to guard Mona Drew, the movie star? Against what, Michael?"

"Jealous females," grinned Shayne.

Lucy didn't quite snap from the doorway, but she disappeared quickly.

### III

GEORGE SILVER was waiting for Mike Shayne at the Palm Tree at noon.

The motel had a clean, medium-priced look. The detective counted five cars braked at various units. Five cars at high noon of a weekday probably was par.

Silver waved Shayne into an air-conditioned unit. "Mona's at the pool. You want coffee?"

Shayne declined. Silver poured coffee from a discount store pot while the detective looked through an open doorway into the next unit. The room was in disarray.

"Mona's used to someone pickin' up after her," Silver said.

"Where's the pool?"

"Out back," said Silver. "Here, this door over here." He went to a door in the opposite wall, opened it. Sunshine and heat flooded in. Shayne saw the smooth, blue water of the swimming pool.

"Place is built like a box," said Silver. "Pool's closed in by units on all sides. Makes it nice and cozy."

Shayne filled the open doorway, squinted against the glare

of the sunshine and water. He saw two people. Across the pool, a young, pink girl was stretched out in a webbed, layback chair in a pose. Her right knee was high, youthful body arched slightly and a magazine was propped against her thigh. But her head was back and huge sunglasses covered her eyes. She was turning on the profile look.

On the near side of the pool, a long, beautifully tanned woman sat at ease in another webbed, layback chair. Her legs were down, ankles crossed casually and she didn't need to arch her spine to emphasize the hills and curves of a toned body. She wore two strips of purple cloth, and Shayne noticed she had reddish tints in her hair. She glanced at him and then put on purple sunglasses and stared out across the water.

"Nice," said Shayne.

"And stuffed with talent," breathed Silver.

"What's she reading?"

"Huh? Oh, Christ, Shayne, not the kid! Not Pinkie! Mona is on this side!"

Shayne closed the door, lit a cigarette, sent twin trails of smoke out his nostrils as he tugged at his left ear lobe with the forefinger and thumb of his right hand. He liked having Silver off balance. "Couple of questions, George."

"Shoot, man."

"How come you're in Miami? Miss Drew your only client these days?"

"I've got others in the stable. But nothing big right now. I keep in contact by phone."

"Miss Drew is the big bread winner."

"Right on, man. And I like her, too. Not many people do."

"She needs a friend."

"Doesn't everyone?"

"You said you've been her agent for a long time."

"Years."

"I assume that in the old days you knocked on doors for her."

"I've gone to bed with red knuckles many a rough night, yeah."

"But now, since the Academy, the work comes to Mona. She's sought, not doing the seeking."

"You got it."

"How's your contract with her?"

"Okay."

"You're satisfied with your percentage?"

"It's okay."

"What's your cut?"

"That's only between me'n Mona."

"Your end gone up since the Academy?"

Silver's eyes narrowed. He ran a finger down his nose in a swiping gesture. He seemed to be sifting thoughts.

"It didn't need to go up," he finally said.

"I thought you might have hired someone to throw blood on her. That lighter routine could have been staged."

Silver gaped. "Why would I do that?"

"To scare her."

"Huh?"

"She's big now, you say. Maybe you want her to think that because she is big, nuts are going to pick on her. All kinds of screwballs. So she needs protection she didn't need before. You can provide that protection, handle the details. But protection takes dough, of course. And what she hands out could offset the difference between a lousy contract and a good contract with her."

George Silver surprised Shayne. He merely shook his head, said, "It isn't that way, man," and then went to a window and stood with the drapes held back. The detective knew Silver was looking at Mona Drew.

"She's been fair with me, and I like her," he said after several seconds of silence. "It's why I've stuck with her through all the lean years. Hell, maybe I'm in love with her in a way. She feeds my blood, makes my juices flow, makes my feet work. I'll turn the world inside out for her, if that's what she

wants. My deal with her would make some other agents, if they knew, laugh long and loud and hard at me. I don't care. The hell with other agents, other people. Mona'n me, we click."

Silver turned from the window, let the drapes fall into place. He suddenly seemed defeated by something. "If you don't want to buy what I'm saying, Shayne, butt out. If you do want to buy, Mona is at the pool. I'm gonna have another cup of coffee."

Mona Drew had oiled her golden body by the time Shayne reached her. He drew a straightbacked web chair up beside her. She turned the purple sunglasses on him. "Sit at my feet, Mr. Shayne," she said.

"Go to hell, Miss Drew," he replied.

The sunglasses left him. She looked down the length of golden legs, wiggled toes. "So we're off to a rollicking start."

She wore a huge diamond ring on the middle finger of her right hand. He sat about two feet from the ring, admiring it and then her sharp profile. She was a beautiful woman, he decided. He got out a package of cigarettes, flipped a cigarette halfway out of the pack and offered it. "Smoke?"

"No," she said without turning her head.

He lit the cigarette, waved

the flame and accidentally dropped the match near her arm. She didn't look at him, and something about the stoniness alerted him. He made a sudden jabbing motion at her with extended fingers. She seemed to ignore him. He moved the lighted end of the cigarette toward her. She didn't move.

"How long have you been blind in your right eye, Miss Drew?" he asked.

Her head snapped around. He saw her lips thin, and he waited for the outburst. But she remained silent.

"I wondered how someone in an open parking lot managed to slip up so close to you." Shayne moved his chair down to her feet, faced her, drew from the cigarette. "Better?"

She remained silent.

He frowned in thought for a moment, then asked, "Is your half blindness common knowledge?"

"My mother knows," she said after a few seconds. "My father did. There have been a few other people."

"George Silver, of course."

"Certainly. It isn't that much of a handicap, Mr. Shayne. I trained myself to be lefthanded years ago."

"How about some of the people you are currently working with?"

She shook her head. "No."

"I find that difficult to believe."

She looked straight at him, the eyes shadows behind the tint of the sunglasses.

"I found out," he said.

Presently she shrugged slightly. "None of them know," she said confidently.

"Someone could've used that knowledge," he pressed. "Purposely approached you from your right side last night."

George Silver appeared on the pool apron. He had a cup in his hand. "Coffee, baby?" he called out.

"No," she replied.

Silver joined them. "Do you mind, Shayne?"

The detective saw a round, bald man come out of a doorway beyond the far end of the pool. The round man approached, waddling, from behind Mona Drew. He seemed reluctant, but he came on. He carried a white envelope in chubby fingers.

"It's getting to be a clam-bake," said the redhead.

"That's Sam Turner," said Silver. "He owns the joint. Hi yuh, Sam?"

"I have a letter for Miss Drew." Sam Turner's voice broke. He stopped about eight feet away, as if awaiting orders. He was nervous.

"Sure, sure," said Silver. "I'll



take it." He went to the fat man quickly.

"A boy brought it to the desk," said Turner.

Shayne was instantly alert. "Where's the kid now?"

The abruptness made Sam Turner flinch. "I dunno. He rode off on his bike."

Silver scowled on Shayne. "What's your trouble, man?" But he didn't wait for an answer. He looked at the envelope, grunted. "You want me to handle it, baby?"

"Yes," said Mona Drew, uninterested.

Silver put the cup at his feet and ripped open the flap of the

envelope. He withdrew a folded sheet of white typing paper and a photograph. He stared on the photograph, then glanced at the paper. When he looked up, he gasped, "Holy God! Blackmail!"

## IV

THE PITCH was as old as photography. A younger Mona Drew had her head against a pillow in the glossy print. Her eyes were closed and her expression was impassive above a man's bare shoulder. The man had a full head of hair and an excellent-looking spine. The blackmail note was explicit too. It said in neatly-typed letters:

*Like chicken blood, cat? The next time it could be acid. \$100,000 will prevent.*

"Bastard!" hissed George Silver, ripping the photograph.

Shayne leaped at him, clamped huge hands on the man's wrists. He applied pressure savagely, forcing Silver to drop the two pieces of photograph, envelope and blackmail note. Then he flipped the agent away, retrieved everything, returned to his chair, fitted the pieces of photograph together to be sure no corner was missing. He looked up suddenly at Mona Drew and growled, "Spill."

"It's a fake!" shouted

George Silver. "A superimposed—"

"No, George," said Mona Drew quietly. "It happened a long time ago. Before I knew you. I was hungry. The man's name was Donald Farryington. I—"

"But she's dead!" yelled George Silver.

"Yes," nodded Mona Drew. "He died a few years ago of a heart attack."

"Who was he?" snapped Shayne.

"A film distributor!" rasped Silver.

"You're sure he's dead?"

"Yes," said Mona.

"You said you were hungry, Miss Drew," pressed Shayne.

She shrugged. It wasn't indifference, merely reflexive. "I was living with a girl friend, Brenda Helm. We shared a room, which was nothing new. We were roommates at college. We were friends, with mutual interests, soccer, swimming, rifle team, drama. We went to Hollywood following graduation, starved. Then Brenda, somehow, met Donald Farryington."

"And fed you to him."

"We each fed him, Mr. Shayne. Donald Farryington had an appetite."

"Who took the pictures?"

"I don't know."

"Brenda maybe?"



"She's dead, too, Mr. Shayne. She was killed in an automobile accident, I heard."

"Heard?"

"Brenda and I split."

Mona Drew looked the detective straight in the eye then.

"Mr. Shayne," she said, "Brenda and I hadn't eaten solid food in a week. She came up with Farryington, and I went along with her. For money, to put food on our table. It was the only time in my life I've done that sort of thing."

"It seems it was one too many times. Why did you and Brenda Helm split? Was it over Farryington?"

"Me," interrupted George Silver. "I caused the split."

The detective shot the agent a look.

"I had Mona and Brenda Helm. Straight percentage of anything I could get either of them. I stumbled into a bit part. It seemed to suit Brenda. I went up to their room to pass on the tidings. But Brenda was out, Mona was in. I gave her the word. Only the next day Mona showed at the lot, Brenda was ill, Mona said, couldn't make it. I took a chance, promoted Mona as Brenda. And baby came on strong from there—naturally. I tell yuh, she's got talent."

"And Brenda Helm?"

"Cut out."

"Miss Drew?"

"She found out what I'd done," said Mona Drew. "But what the hell, it was me against her! And I was tired of starving! Anyway, she had other talents."

"So Brenda really wasn't ill that morning."

"No."

"You simply aced her out."

"I'd do it again if I was that hungry."

"These other talents?"

"She was an exhibitionist and a prostitute."

"For Farryington."

"And others."

"So rip goes a friendship of years."

"All things end, Mr. Shayne. I never heard from Brenda or anything about her again."

"Except that she was killed in a car wreck."

"Well... yes. There was that, of course."

Shayne held up the two pieces of photograph. "Where was this taken?"

"At Donald Farryington's house."

"Who else was there?"

"No one."

"Just you two girls and Farryington?"

"Yes."

"Then who took the picture?"

"I don't know."

"A hidden camera, Shayne," George Silver put in. "That's no trick. It was probably a camera in the ceiling."

"Farryington was that kind?"

"He must've been!"

"But you don't know."

"I didn't even know the guy. I'm just assuming—"

"Don't assume," interrupted Shayne. "You got any pals out west today who might've known this Farryington?"

"One guy, yeah."

"Then get on the phone. Find out what made Farryington tick."

"Now?"

"Now!"

"While you do what?"

"In the meantime, I'll try to track down a kid on a bike."

The detective found the round man behind the desk in the motel office. Sam Turner still was nervous. "Is everything all right out there? I heard shouting."

"This kid who delivered the letter," said Shayne, "you said he showed on a bicycle?"

"Yes."

"You know him?"

"No."

"On a bike, I figured he might be a neighborhood kid."

"Oh, he is! I see him riding almost every day. But I don't know his name."

"You got somebody who can replace you here at the desk?"

"Well, yes. But—"

"Get 'em. You and I are going kid-hunting, pal."

Sam Turner produced a wife who was uncertain about what was happening, and then Shayne and the round man cruised the neighborhood streets in the detective's top-down convertible. They had a couple of false starts over young boys on bicycles before Turner sat forward and peered hard through the windshield.

"There he is! Up ahead. That kid on the blue bike."

Shayne pulled into the curb, and flagged down the boy. The boy looked ten to twelve and bright. "Yes sir?" he said, straddling the bicycle and cocking his head slightly at the looming redhead.

Shayne turned on a huge grin. "Hi, pal. Hey, you just delivered a letter to Mr. Turner at his motel."

The boy brightened. "Yep. A man gave me five dollars to take it over there."

The boy snaked fingers into a tight jean pocket and held up a folded five dollar bill. The bill went back into the pocket almost as fast as it had appeared.

Shayne kept his grin, got out his wallet, produced another five. "You know the man?"

"Nope. Never saw him before."

Shayne passed the bill to the boy. "Tell me what he looked like, how he was dressed."

"Well, he was kinda wild looking, you know? I mean, he was a short man, round—kinda like Mr. Turner. But he had big eyes and—"

"Yes?" Shayne prodded on the hesitation.

"Well, it seemed like he never blinked his eyes. He was kinda spooky."

"How was he dressed?"

"He wore a brown suit. It looked old."

"Hat?"

The boy nodded. "One of those—what do you call 'em? A hat with a wide brim."

"Plantation hat?"

"Yes." The boy nodded again. "And he had a camera hanging from his shoulder."

"Anything else?"

"He chewed toothpicks."

"Yeah?"

"One after another. And they were wrapped toothpicks. You know, I didn't know you could get wrapped toothpicks, mister."

"What's your name, son?"

"Bill Finn."

"Well, listen, Bill, can you take me to the spot where the man flagged you down?"

"Sure. It's just down the street from the motel."

"You lead on your bike, Bill. I'll follow in the car."

Bill Finn led as if he were at the head of a parade. He got off his bicycle again about a half block from the motel. The front of the motel was in full view from the vantage. Bill Finn leaned against a palm tree.

"This is where he was standing," he told Shayne.

"Did you see the man taking pictures with his camera?" Shayne asked, looking around in the grass. He picked up a long, slender wrapper.

"Nope," said the boy. "He was just standing here, leaning up against this tree. I rode past him a couple of times before he stopped me."

Shayne had found what he wanted. The toothpick wrapper had the name Wander Inn printed on it in tiny gold letters. "You've been a help, Bill."

The boy mounted his bicycle, looked straight at the detective for a few seconds. Shayne waited. Bill Finn may have thought of something else distinctive about the man with the camera. But all he said was, "Boy, do I feel rich!"

And then he rode off.

## V

MIKE SHAYNE returned to George Silver's motel room. Silver sat on the edge of a rumpled

bed, the phone at his left elbow. He leaped up as the detective entered.

"Shayne, you won't believe this!"

"Try me," the redhead said, noticing that the connecting door to Mona Drew's room was closed. He went to the back window, looked out. Only Pink Girl was at the pool. He faced Silver, shot a look at the connecting door. "Is Miss Drew in her room?"

"Dressing. Listen, Shayne, I'd like to—"

"Packing, too?"

Silver cocked his head, frowned.

"Running is no out," said the detective. "Sooner or later, she'll surface again and the blackmailer will hit again."

"Nobody is running, Shayne!" George Silver shuffled, remained excited. "Hey, don't you want to know what I found out from my friend on the Coast?"

"Shoot."

Silver swiped at his nose. "Farrington liked to photograph himself! Got his kicks that way. A bundle of that kind of stuff was found in his home when he died. But a brother disposed of it all, kept Farrington's lusts quiet. Except—"

Silver paused. He looked as if he was savoring a monumental announcement.

"Shayne," he said, "what if brother didn't dispose of everything he found?"

"Brother didn't." Shayne grunted. He suddenly tugged at the lobe of his left ear. "And you found out brother is right here in Miami."

"Hey, how the hell did you know that?"

"I smell those kind of things, pal. Okay, who is he? Where do I find him?"

"His name is Frank Farrington!" Silver hesitated again and the redhead sensed Silver still was playing a role. Then Silver exploded: "He's a minister, a preacher! A *minister*, Shayne! I can't believe it!"

"What kind of a minister is he?"

"Hell. I didn't ask," Silver exploded.

"Maybe he had a cult."

"Huh?"

"Chicken blood, George," the detective said thoughtfully.

"Hey, I didn't think of that!"

"Well, think about this: you're going to hear from the blackmailer again. You didn't get instructions for delivery of the \$100,000. When and where."

"Yeowie! Right, man!"

"So it's time to call the cops."

"No cops, Shayne! Please, no cops."



"Hell, it can't go on forever."

"It can go on for as long as Mona Drew has money, for as long as she is a celebrity. There's always a magazine somewhere that will print the pictures, especially since she is an Academy Award winner."

Silver wagged his head, began to pace the small confines of the room. Shayne watched him. Silver repeated, "No cops, Shayne. You do it. You said you are an investigator. So investigate, man."

He stopped pacing suddenly, looked the detective straight in the eye. "Keep the cops out. If you can't play it that way, fade. I'll find someone else."

Shayne debated. He could use the talent of his longtime friend, Will Gentry, chief of Miami police; he could use the talents of Gentry's men. For one thing, the phone hookup at the motel needed to be bugged. The blackmailer could call the next time. For another, a stake-out was needed. Silver and Mona Drew probably had been tailed when they left the Palm Tree to go to dinner Sunday night. The tail or a relief man could still be hanging around.

"I'm serious, Shayne," Silver said, interrupting the detective's thinking. "No cops is part of my deal with you. I'm making it a part. I don't know how you

The redhead stared hard at the agent. "You afraid of the police?"

"We don't want the publicity! Mona will pay! I've already discussed it with her. If we bring in cops, they'll want to know what the lever is. And then it gets in the newspapers."

"Cops don't tell everything they know, Silver."

"But there'll be rumors, man! And Rumors are bad news, too, worse sometimes. No cops. We'll pay."

"What do you expect to get for \$100,000?" Shayne asked. "Come on, you're not a naive man. You know the blackmail won't stop with one payment."

private detectives operate, but—"

"Okay, Silver," said the detective. "No police for the moment." Shayne didn't have time to argue. "I'll do some nosing. You two hang tight here. You could hear from the blackmailer again. If you do, play it cool. Tell him you're putting the \$100,000 together, but you need time."

"The cash is already on its way," said Silver.

Shayne grunted. "You made two calls to the west coast, huh?"

"What would you do in my position?" said Silver, sounding as if he was standing on the edge of a grave.

Shayne shot a glance at the connecting door. "How's she taking it?"

"Okay."

"No duckouts, George."

"Naw."

"And no more pills."

"Huh?"

"I want both of you alert. If the blackmailer calls, memorize the message. Anything can help at this stage."

"Right, right, we're alert."

Shayne drove toward his Flagler Street office. He intended to alert Will Gentry. Silver had his reasons for not wanting police, but the redhead figured he had stronger reasons for having Gentry inside. Gen-

try's technicians, for instance, could sift information from the photograph, blackmail note and envelope a private eye never would find. Too, the detective had worked with Gentry for years; Miami was their town. Silver was a client, no more. To be respected as a client, certainly, but clients came to detectives for help. If that help happened to shape up in the form of cops, the client got cops.

At his office, Shayne strapped on the shoulder rig with its .45 snug in place while Lucy Hamilton scanned the yellow pages of the telephone directory.

"The Reverend Frank Farryington is a Methodist minister," she announced, scribbling on a note pad. She closed the directory. "Okay, Michael, here are both addresses. The top one is the Wander Inn."

Lucy tore the sheet of note paper from the pad and Shayne took it, glanced at it. Shayne folded the paper, stuffed it in a coat pocket. "Any questions, Angel?"

Brown curls danced as Lucy shook her head. "No." She glanced at the two pieces of photograph, the envelope and the blackmail note that lay on her desk.

"Emphasize to Gentry I want all of this kept quiet," Shayne said. "I'll contact him



later this afternoon. In the meantime, he can have his boys go to work."

Driving across town, the red-head searched his memory again. He had a large repertoire of Miami bad guys, but a round man who habitually carried a camera and who did not blink was not included.

The Reverend Frank Farryington's church was a huge modern structure. Next door was a new white stone home. Farryington seemed to have drawn a prosperous Methodist assignment.

A small, pleasant-looking woman, carefully groomed, opened the front door of the white stone house to the red-head's summons. She identified herself as Mrs. Farryington and said that her husband was in Europe.

"Traveling, Mr. Shayne," the woman said, tilting her head slightly, "with the children's choir. They are on tour and will not return until the twenty-ninth of this month."

"I see," said Shayne, "and the group left when, Mrs. Farryington?"

"Two weeks ago." She paused. "Perhaps I can help you."

"You already have, Mrs. Farryington," said Shayne. He tipped his hat and departed.

As he drove away, he saw

the woman still standing in the doorway of the home. She looked puzzled. He didn't particularly like leaving her dangling, but there didn't seem to be any reason to stir the dust of what probably was an unpleasant memory either.

The whereabouts of the Reverend Frank Farryington would have to be doublechecked, of course, but for the moment he was scratched. Shayne pointed the convertible into the shank of the city.

The Wander Inn looked like a one-man operation. It was tucked into a cubbyhole on a side street. Its fame probably lay in neighborhood friendliness and free wrapped toothpicks that were piled in scattered saucers.

There were four customers when Shayne entered, three guys occupying bar stools and an afternoon housewife hustler at a small table in a corner. The bartender was a tall, narrow man in a pink shirt and a black beard draped from a pointed chin.

The bartender stared, the housewife departed quickly and the three guys on stools shifted nervously as Shayne planted elbows on the bar and ordered a cognac and ice water.

"Off duty?" asked the bartender. He attempted to sound

conversational, but he was suspicious.

"On duty," said Shayne, "and looking for a guy." He tasted the cognac. It was a cheap brand.

"Do you have a name?" queried the bartender. He apparently had decided to fish.

"No name," said Shayne.

"Makes it tough. Probably doesn't hang here."

"Probably does," said Shayne, putting the toothpick wrapper on the bar.

The bartender nodded. "So he's been in, but maybe just once. I wouldn't remember him. I get lots of jokers who come in just once."

"Figures," nodded Shayne. "But let's try on a description. Short, round; brown suit, plantation hat, camera slung over shoulder or around neck, big eyes, doesn't blink."

"Ah," said the bartender.

Down the bar, the three customers shifted again, looked at one another, smiled, relaxed.

Shayne said, "Known—and not popular."

The bartender shrugged.

"Answers," Shayne snarled.

The bartender snapped erect. The three customers no longer moved, no longer smiled.

"Olive Eyes," said the bartender.

"More!"

"Tony Martini. He lives

down the street." The bartender rattled an address. "He can't blink. He's got a rebuilt mug. He was in a war sometime, got hurt, gets a government check. That's all I know, cop-per."

"The camera?"

"Olive Eyes likes to take pictures. So?"

Shayne found the address and the room on the second floor. The door was unlocked. He walked inside and stopped. The round man was flat on his back in the middle of a sagging bed, belly high. He was shoeless and his stockinged toes angled out. He would be a short, fat man if he were standing. He wore brown suit pants and a gray undershirt. The bed was pressed into a corner of the room, wall up from the head, wall up from the side. A plantation hat looked stuck against the wall above the man's head. On the other wall a camera dangled from a strap that was hooked on a nail.

Shayne dropped his stare to the man again. The man was spread very wide and was very dead. A toothpick stuck up from each eyeball.

## VI

WILL GENTRY stood in the death room and looked around, head pivoting slowly. Mike

Shayne watched and waited in silence. Gentry's heavy features were wrinkled, his grizzled eyebrows down. The stub of a black cigar was stuck in the right corner of his mouth as he inventoried. His lab men were finished, had departed. In the dim hallway outside the room, the morgue boys were lolling, waiting for the police chief to okay the removal of the corpse.

Gentry went to the dead man's side one more time, gingerly fingered the man's skull. The skull moved around easily and Shayne had the impression its consistency might be soft clay.

Finally Gentry said sourly, "Weapon, Mike?"

"I didn't spot anything when I came up here," said Shayne. "Off the top of my head, I'd say a sap. The killer took it with him."

The black cigar stub bobbed. "Un-huh," Gentry said in thought. "And the toothpicks?"

"Somebody's weird idea of humor, Martini. Olive Eyes. Toothpicks." The redhead moved around the room. Restlessness was catching up with him.

"What about this guy, Will?" Shayne asked. "You got him in your files?"

"I know of him," said the chief. He went to the door, told

the morgue boys they could have Tony Martini.

"But right now, without looking at his tickets, I'm not sure how I know him," Gentry continued. "Which means we've collared him for petty stuff, probably a variety, and I've heard his name bandied by my people, no more."

"Bartender down the street told me he was living on a government pension, was a vet with a rebuilt face."

"We'll get his pedigree out of the computers," said the chief. "But what we won't get is his tie to this blackmail thing."

"Your people turn up anything on the note or photograph?"

"Nothing significant so far. I'd just finished reading the preliminary findings when I got your call to hustle out here. No latents we could pick up, and the envelope and paper could've come out of almost any store. Standard typewriter was used, experienced typist. The photo paper is common."

"Martini had the photo bug," said the redhead, moving to the open dresser drawers again. He stared down thoughtfully at the scattered collection of glossy prints. Most were arty, the Life-in-the-City type: a wino asleep in an alley; lovers on a park bench, a fat Cuban woman framed in a glassless

window. Mixed among the prints were standard, printed rejection slips from various photo magazines.

Shayne shifted his look the the dresser top. Scattered there were prints he had selected earlier. Some of the pictures seemed to have been taken inside an apartment or house temple. Reproduced were tiny wall tabernacles, burning candle stubs, robed people. But there were no faces. The cameraman had taken his pictures from behind the people.

Then there were the two seemingly totally unrelated photos he had found. The subject was a woman who was naked to the waist, where a brief strip of spangles took over before giving way to bare legs. The woman appeared to be a topless dancer caught in action, probably at a club.

The redhead scowled and Gentry, who had moved up beside him, said, "You thinking Martini could've been the cameraman in the blackmail thing, Mike?"

"That happened a long time ago and in California, Will. But who printed this stuff?" Shayne waved an arm vaguely. "Martini himself? There's no darkroom up here."

They went downstairs and accosted the building superintendent again. With some care

Liz Walker could have been an attractive woman. But care was gone, along with incentive for almost anything.

"Sure, Tony had a darkroom," she said, standing propped in the entry of her apartment. She took a toothpick from her mouth. "Top floor. I rented it extra only for him."

"We'd like to see that room, Mrs. Walker," said Gentry.

She took a key from the pocket of faded blue jeans, poked it at the police chief with a crooked smile. "I figured you would, so go on up there. Look to your heart's desire. But you're not going to find anything."

Her eyes darted to Shayne. The smile widened. "Hi, Red. You're a tough-lookin' mutt. I could learn to like you maybe. You're kinda like Tony was. Ugly."

"He wasn't that bad, Liz."

"Naw, guess he wasn't. Anyway, I like ugly guys—dunno why. Just queersies that way, I guess."

"You and Tony close?"

"Whatcha mean?"

"You know."

"Oh . . . naw."

"He have a girlfriend, Liz?"

"How would I know?"

"I figure you kept tabs on him."

"If you figure that way all

the time, I can see why you're just a dumb cop."

"Who is she, Liz?"

"Get off my back!"

"I spotted a couple of photographs of her upstairs. She looked like she was dancing in a—"

"A prize, ain't she?"

"Then you've seen the pictures."

"Tony showed 'em to me. He thought they was a big deal."

"Who is she?"

"I dunno."

"Where did Tony take the pictures?"

"I dunno."

"It looks like he might've snapped them while she was working."

"Could be."

"I found some other photographs. Looked like they were taken inside a temple maybe."

Liz Walker frowned.

"Maybe inside the nest of a cult. Was Tony interested in that kind of thing?"

"Tony wasn't weird, man. Maybe a little kooky, but not weird."

"Kooky?"

Liz Walker waved a hand vaguely. "He bopped around."

"Which means?"

"He bopped here and there. He mixed with the spooks. He mixed with the straights. With that crazy, goddamn camera. I



kept tellin' him: 'stay away from the spooks,' but he wouldn't listen. He was kooky, no fear of anybody. He just mingled. Wandered here and there, like nobody would lean on him ever, for anything."

"Except someone did."

"I told him: 'Stay away from the spooks.'"

"Who are the spooks, Liz?"

"I dunno."

"Ever see any of them here?"

"Once. A guy came lookin' for Tony. Some days ago. I ran into him out in the hallway. I

was goin' out of my pad here and he was comin' in the front door of the building. He shook hell out of me. A real kook. He wore a white gown, and he had on sandals. He had a thick, dirty beard and long, dirty hair. He looked like my image of Jesus Christ. He scared the living hell—"

"This was daytime or night?"

"Night."

"You get his name?"

"Are you kiddin'?"

"But he told you he was here to see Tony."

"He asked for Tony, yeah."

"Tony mention him to you later?"

"Yeah, because I asked. As soon as the kook left, I beat it up to Tony's room. I figured maybe this nut killed him or something."

"But Tony was okay."

"He just laughed. Said the guy was opening the door of opportunity. That's opportunity with a capital O."

"Which meant what to you?"

"Nothing."

"How did this man and Tony happen to know each other?"

Liz Walker frowned again.

"Through the cat, I guess."

"The dancer?"

"Tony knew her and she knew the creep. The creep came

to Tony. That's the way I got it."

"Tony didn't say what this opportunity—with a capital O—was?"

"No."

"But Tony had a darkroom."

"I told you. It's upstairs. He fixed it up himself."

"You ever been up there, Liz?"

"Well, sure! Hundreds of times!"

"What's up there?"

"Nothing. Just a darkroom. Tony made his pictures there."

"Maybe this man who came to Tony had a negative he wanted printed."

"Maybe."

"And maybe he came back here this afternoon."

"Maybe."

"That's right, you wouldn't know. Let's see, you said you were shopping downtown today."

"Got the memory of an elephant, haven't you, copper?"

"Left here around eleven this morning and didn't return until—"

"You know damn well when I got home, Red! You guys were already crawlin' all over my place like worms! And one of your mutts grabbed me outside and hustled me up to you two like I was—"

"Okay, Liz."

"Okay, what?"

"Okay, I've got the picture again. Cool it, will you?"

Shayne grinned suddenly, making the grin wide and crooked for her. She glowered for a moment, then seemed to relax.

"Cops make me hot," she mumbled.

"We're going to shag it now," said the detective. "But you keep in touch, huh? You think of something that might help us find Tony's killer, you—"

"Yeah, I'll call."

"Ask for Will Gentry."

"That you?"

"No. This is Will." Shayne half turned to the police chief, waved a hand. "He's the cop."

"You're not?"

"No."

Liz Walker looked confused.

"My name is Shayne. I'm private."

Liz Walker's eyes traveled up and down the huge frame of the redhead.

"Damn," she breathed, "I think I wish you were."

## VII

MIKE SHAYNE and Will Gentry split outside the apartment building. The police chief stuffed his bulk behind the steering wheel of an unmarked police sedan and headed for his

files and computers. He'd have Tony Martini's true pedigree down pat within the hour. More important, he might turn up a Martini associate who wasn't exactly in love with the amateur grifter-photographer.

Shayne looked over his shoulder at someone who had been in love with Martini. Liz Walker was at a front window, staring out. The detective flipped his hand in departure, Liz Walker nodded without changing expression, and the redhead cut across the street to his topdown convertible. He wondered if Liz Walker had it in her to kill. Not everyone could take a human life. But sometimes jealousy and quick anger could be powerful drives.

Shayne tucked the thought into a crook of his mind for later contemplation and eased the convertible into the traffic line. He scowled over what had not been found inside Liz Walker's building. Martini's dark-room had not produced anything of value. It had been a small niche, neat. The quizzing of other dwellers in the building had been fruitless too. No one had heard any out of the ordinary sound: shout, scream, yell.

But that could figure, the redhead decided. The killer could have sapped Martini swiftly, then methodically beat the man to death.



The bearded bartender had the same four customers when Shayne returned to the Wander Inn. But there were no stirrings this time. The housewife hustler remained seated alone at her table, pondering nothing, and the three guys at the bar kept up a running argument among themselves. Everybody now knew Shayne was not fuzz.

The bartender arched eyebrows and said, "You liked my brand of cognac?"

"Your sense of direction, pal," growled Shayne, looming across the bar. "You pointed me to a dead man."

The bartender stroked his beard in thought. "Olive Eyes?"

"He had a girl friend," said Shayne.

The bartender studied the detective for a moment before nodding. "Most guys do, one place or another."

Shayne put a photograph he had taken from Tony Martini's room on the bar. "Do you recognize her?"

The bartender glanced at it, said, "Nope."

"Put clothes on her, mentally."

The bartender glanced again. "Still nope. She kill him?"

"Did I say Tony Martini had been murdered?"

The bartender stood like stone. "I was told he had a heart attack."

"Somebody made meatloaf out of his skull."

"It could happen to Olive Eyes," nodded the bartender.

"Why?"

"The camera. He was always pokin' with the crazy camera."

"Wrong places?"

"If it had been in the right places, would he have lived in this neighborhood?"

"Sometimes the wrong place can be the right place, financially."

"Possible, I suppose," the bartender said. "A guy might come up with a valuable picture once in a while, I suppose. But Marnie didn't kill him. Not over that picture. What the hell does Marnie care? Showin' skin's her trade. Hell, she's been bouncin'—"

The bartender cut off the words and became very nervous. He shuffled. And down the bar the three guys had clammed. Out of the corner of his eye, Shayne saw them staring. He reached out and caught the beard, jerked.

"Marnie?" he snarled.

The bartender pawed. The three guys moved. A chair scraped against the floor behind the detective. With his free hand, he took the .45 from its shoulder rig and put it on the bar. He kept his hand three inches from the gun. Everyone became frozen. He tugged on

the beard. "I can pick out the hairs one by one, pal," he said savagely.

"Marnie. That's all I know," rasped the bartender.

Shayne jerked the beard. "You said she'd been bouncing—"

"She's been around a while! Weeks! Months! I dunno. I've seen her here and there. But Marnie, that's all I know, honest!"

"Dancer."

"Yeah!"

"Topless."

"Yeah!"

"Olive Eyes?"

"He took a flash to her. Mister, you're hurtin' hell out of my chin. You're pullin'."

Shayne jerked hard.

"I dunno where you can find her!" screamed the bartender.

"Try The Stable," said the housewife hustler quietly.

Shayne released the bartender and whirled, snapping up the .45. He slapped it in the shoulder rig. The housewife's suddenly lifted eyebrows alerted him. He whirled again in a crouch and whipped out the gun, levelled the muzzle on the bent bartender.

The bartender didn't move a muscle as the detective approached. Shayne reached over the bar and under, shoving the .45 up under the beard. He found metal, hefted a .38. He

looked straight into the bartender's frightened eyes.

"Go down the bar," the red-head said tightly, "and serve three beers. They're on the house."

He returned to the housewife.

"It's on Thinger Avenue. Last I knew, Marnie was working there."

"She's a friend of yours?"

"I know her like I know Nixon. I've heard of her."

The Stable was a dark hole-in-the-wall that featured smoke pollution, musical torture for eardrums and near-naked female bodies. The bodies wore spangles, long fingernails and plastered smiles. They also served beer to a six o'clock on-the-way-home-from-the-office crowd of males. No cognac.

Shayne asked for Marnie as one of the spangled girls put a round of beers on a crowded table down the line and then went up on a tiny stage and began to gyrate among a whirling kaleidoscope of lights. The crowd at the table applauded.

Shayne did not applaud. He did not like what he had heard from the blonde who had been leaning a flat belly on his shoulder as she methodically wiped his table. She had said, "Marnie doesn't work here anymore, thank God. How come all you

guys are hung on Marnie? Just because she was older . . ."

Shayne got an assistant manager, a young slick with a pencil mustache. He reminded the red-head of Peter Painter, the chief of detectives over in Miami Beach, a man Shayne did not like.

"We let her go," said the young slick. "About a week ago. Okay?"

"No," Shayne said bluntly.

The slick sighed. "We don't like cats who invite visits by the vice boys or the narcs."

Shayne displayed the photograph. Slick bent to get a close look in the dimness.

"Her," he nodded. "Marnie. Who took that picture? That ain't allowed in here."

"The guy's dead."

Slick straightened, fingered the pencil mustache. "Forget I asked."

"Marnie's real name?"

Slick hesitated, then said, "Margaret Swing on her Social Security ticket."

"And she's working where now?"

"Dunno."

"Living where?"

"Dunno."

"You let her go. Why?"

"Turned on too much for us. She went too far. We could get a vice boy off-duty, just out havin' a little fun, yuh know? But he could get up the next

morning, have a hangover, remember where he had his fun, lean. We don't need that."

"You also mentioned Narcs."

"Forget it," said Slick. "I tend to lump cops. Marnie was straight. She used no acid. She didn't need it. She had plenty of natural juice."

"Point me to her girl pals."

"She didn't have any here. The other girls didn't like her. It was another reason we let her fly. She was—" He hesitated again, worked the mustache—"well, a little older than our other girls."

"But she had talent."

"Amen."

"Male pals?"

"None here, man. That's taboo."

"Except among the management, maybe?"

Slick's eyes lit up, danced. He nervously fingered the mustache. "Naw."

"You're a liar."

Slick said nothing.

"You know a guy named Tony Martini?"

"No."

"Olive Eyes?"

"No."

"How about a guy who walks around in a white robe?"

"No." Slick shook his head vigorously.

"Nobody like that ever been in, huh?"



"I'd remember, man."

"You going to remember me?"

"Un-huh."

Shayne stood, towered over Slick, gave him a business card. "That'll help."

"A private detective?" Slick said, looking up wide-eyed.

"With cop friends."

"Hey, man, you don't hafta lean. If I hear anything about Marnie, I'll call."

"Nose around a little too, pal. It won't hurt you."

"Sure, sure, Mr. Shayne."

Shayne drove against the glare of the early evening sun to

his apartment. He knew the day he would hear from Slick would be the day Congress outlawed income taxes. But he had found, over the years, that advertising sometimes got results.

Shayne parked the convertible in the basement garage and rode the self-service elevator up to the ringing of the telephone in his apartment.

George Silver was hot. He yelled: "You brought in cops, Shayne!"

"Cops usually investigate murder in this town, pal," the redhead said flatly.

"But—"

"And Gentry's a good man, an intelligent cop."

"You say! Shayne, he practically accused Mona of killing this—"

"Tony Martini?" the redhead helped patiently.

"Yeah! Martini! Man, she didn't even know Martini! How could she kill—"

"Gentry was looking at it from a motive angle, Silver. Your girl had motive. Martini delivered the photograph to the motel."

"Well, he isn't the black-mailer! That's for sure!"

"Yeah?"

"Mona just got a call! About twenty minutes ago and the bread is to be delivered in the morning!"

"Where?"

"Place called Flamingo Park! Ever heard of it?"

"You're not far from it. It's a popular park."

"Yeah, well, this dame said to—"

"It was a woman who called?"

"Yeah! A dame! And she told Mona to be in the park at eleven o'clock in the morning!"

### VIII

MONA DREW was in George Silver's room when Mike Shayne arrived at the motel. The connecting door between the two units was open and the air in both rooms was hazy with cigarette smoke. Mona Drew, attractive in a one-piece jumpsuit that fitted without a crease, sat on the edge of a bed, long legs crossed as she chain-smoked. Silver paced the room with a cup of coffee. Both looked fatigued and worried.

The detective listened without interrupting as the movie star and agent yelled at him without bothering to draw straws. And out of it all, he learned little, only that Mona Drew was to walk through Flamingo Park at exactly eleven o'clock the next morning. She was to be carrying the \$100,000 in a suitcase. She was to go to the park alone.

"It stinks," said Shayne.

Mona Drew and George Silver stared at him.

"Amateurish," continued the redhead with a wave of his hand. "The park can be flooded with plainclothes cops, and the blackmailer, unless he or she is totally stupid, must realize this. Sometime between now and eleven in the morning, Miss Drew, you'll get another call with new instructions. What you have now is designed to detour the police."

Mona Drew lit a fresh cigarette; George Silver got a fresh cup of coffee.

"What about the pictures, the negatives?" Shayne asked. "Did your caller say anything about them?"

"Yes." Mona Drew drew on the cigarette quickly. "She said we would exchange in the park."

The detective managed to stifle the groan. He wagged his head. "Do you really think that will happen, doll?"

Mona Drew smoked.

Silver snapped: "Does it have to be complicated, Shayne? Why can't this be a simple trade? The blackmailer wants bread, we give bread. We want negatives, the blackmailer gives negatives. Can't it be that simple?"

"No."

Silver swiped at his nose, resumed pacing. "We could

cut," he finally said. "The hell with the flick Mona is shooting. Let 'em get another star. We could—"

"I told you this morning, George, there isn't an easy way out," Shayne interrupted. "These people have you tagged. If they don't get you here, they will someplace else—a month from now, three months from now, six months." Shayne shrugged. "You're on the hook. Accept it and accept help. They've killed once."

Silver stopped pacing, stared at the redhead. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"They could kill again."

"Kill who?"

"Miss Drew. You."

Mona Drew interrupted from the bed: "All right, Shayne, cards on the table." She snubbed the cigarette in the ashtray on her crossed thighs. "And you shut up, George. Don't utter a word. It's me who is being blackmailed." She looked Shayne straight in the eye. "Tell me if I'm wrong: my value is in being alive, in being what I am, someone who has money, someone who has potential for earning much more money."

"That's it."

"Still, I could be killed."

"It's a possibility if you run, Miss Drew. Frustration, anger—"

She interrupted again: "You said 'they', Mr. Shayne."

"Martini was bludgeoned to death. The weapon probably was a sap. Damn few women are going to carry and use a sap. On the other hand, you received a call from a woman tonight."

"You got an ex-husband anyplace?"

"I've never married."

"Ex-boyfriend?"

"No."

"Think. Don't pass over any one lightly. Some people can carry a beef for a long time, years."

She shook her head.

"Current boy friend?"

She continued to shake her head.

"Jerry Wertz," George Silver put in.

Mona Drew shot the agent a dark side glance.

"Who's he?" Shayne snapped.

"A script writer."

"He's here?"

"Yeah."

Shayne looked at Mona Drew. She had tightened her lips. "Jerry is not a boy friend. He likes me, period. I don't know why."

"Jerry's a swish, Shayne," George Silver said bluntly. "But he's hung on Mona. It's a kind of a dog-master relationship, I guess you could say."

"Have you ever hurt this Wertz, Miss Drew?" asked Shayne, scowling. "Say, emotionally?"

"I don't think so," she replied slowly.

"How long have you known him?"

"Two, almost three years now."

"Would you say he's a greedy man?"

"I don't think he is."

Shayne shot George Silver a look.

"Naw," said the agent. "Jerry makes pretty good bread. He seems satisfied."

"Is he the jealous type?"

Silver shrugged. "Over a woman, I doubt it. But who knows?"

"Jerry Wertz wouldn't do this to me," Mona Drew said confidently.

"Miss Drew," Shayne sighed, "somebody is doing it." He went to the back window, stood holding the drapes apart, stared out on the empty patio and pool. Suddenly he let the drapes fall together and tugged at an earlobe. He faced the room again.

"Where did that photograph, the negative come from? That's the key," he said. "Who turned it up, or who's had it? And why wait until now to use it?"

"Because of the Academy Award," said George Silver. "I

keep trying to tell you, Shayne, the Academy means mucho bread."

"So we're looking for someone who anticipated that some year Mona Drew might win an Academy Award, be worth millions? Razz."

Silver shrugged.

"Or are we looking for someone who has not had the opportunity until now to blackmail?" the redhead continued thoughtfully.

Mona Drew and George Silver again stared.

"I've got a hunch that's it," Shayne said, beginning to pace. "Geography is involved," he said more to himself than to his audience. He stopped suddenly, stared at Mona Drew and George Silver. "If someone meets you in Flamingo Park in the morning, Miss Drew, it doesn't figure you will recognize that person, does it? Because then you would know who the blackmailer is!"

"Well, yes, that is true," she said in a voice that was just above a whisper.

"So you will get another call, or you will be met by a messenger in the park, someone carrying further instructions, probably someone like Martini, someone who isn't involved in the scheme, but has been enlisted."

"Wait a minute," George Sil-



ver put in. "Is that how you're figuring this Martini who was killed? He was just a messenger?"

"A bit more, Silver," the detective said grimly. "Martini was a camera-bug. He had a darkroom. I think someone went to him with a negative, hired him to make prints and a delivery to the motel, then killed because Martini either attempted to muscle in on the blackmail or because someone was afraid he'd eventually bleat."

For the first time since George Silver had come to his office that Monday morning, Shayne felt as if he had his fingers clawed into something that could become solid. It was wet concrete yet, true, but the concrete would harden.

He faced Mona Drew. "You ever been associated with a cult, doll? Of any kind."

She seemed taken back. "My God, no!"

The detective looked at Silver.

"Christ, no!"

"California is loaded with cults, I hear."

"No," repeated Mona Drew, shaking her head vigorously.

"No," said George Silver.

"Know a woman named Margaret Swing?" the redhead asked. "You could've known her as Marnie."

Mona Drew continued to shake her head.

George Silver frowned. "I knew a Marnie—let's see, Marnie Brewster, that's it! Marnie Brewster! She was a film cutter at Metro in the old days!"

"How well did you know her?"

"We dated some."

"Were you working with Miss Drew then?"

"Just starting."

"Would it figure that you would talk to Marnie Brewster about Miss Drew?"

"I suppose I did. Hell, I don't know! But I suppose I did. So?"

"Got any idea where Marnie Brewster is today? What she's doing?"

"Yeah, she's married to a prince. Royalty. Occasionally, they hit the States. I see Marnie's picture in the papers, on TV. They've got four, five kids."

"Is she in the States now?"

"How the hell would I know? I haven't seen anything about Marnie Brewster in at least three years!"

"Did she know Donald Far-ryington?"

"No."

"How can you be positive?"

"If she'd known him in those days, I'd have known him, and I didn't."

"How come you two split?"

"The prince came to Hollywood, Marnie went ape, the prince went ape and George suddenly was out."

"You sound chagrined."

"I am."

"After all these years?"

"Some things, some people you never forget, Shayne."

"So you really would know if the former Marnie Brewster was in the States."

"I'd know," George Silver nodded.

"I have a question," Mona Drew put in suddenly.

Shayne and Silver looked at her in unison.

"Has anyone talked to this Frank Farryington, the minister, the brother of Donald Farryington?"

"He's in Europe," said Shayne. He explained.

But Silver shook his head. "Wait a minute. You go looking for a guy who might be a blackmailer and you let his wife sandbag—" Silver chopped off the words, grunted. "Shayne, what if Farryington isn't in Europe with a bunch of kid singers? What if he's right here in Miami? Maybe the guy's handy with a sap, maybe his wife called Mona tonight!"

Shayne went to the telephone.

"Now what?" rasped Silver.

"I gave Farryington to Gentry to check out," the redhead

said sourly. "Gentry will have him tagged by now."

He dialed Will Gentry's private number, listened to the rings.

Then there was a heavy knock on the door.

Silver jerked, stared at Shayne. The redhead put the phone together slowly, opened his coat, gave himself free access to the holstered .45.

"Get it," he snapped.

Will Gentry stood on the threshold, a black cigar stub stuck in the corner of his mouth.

"Mike," he nodded. "I saw your car outside." He entered. "Miss Drew, Silver," he acknowledged. "You three planning a few shenanigans for Flamingo Park in the morning?"

"Who told you about the drop, Will?" Shayne asked.

"An anonymous caller, a woman. She said you were going to pay off at eleven in the morning, Miss Drew."

## IX

"THIS IS a screwy one, Will," Mike Shayne said, shaking his head. "Movie star doused with chicken blood, blackmailed; a grifter with his skull bashed in and toothpicks sticking out of his eyeballs, and now you people told when and where the blackmail payoff is to be made.

Are we looking for an A-number one nut?"

Gentry scowled, cigar stub bobbing. "An invite to a payoff always stinks."

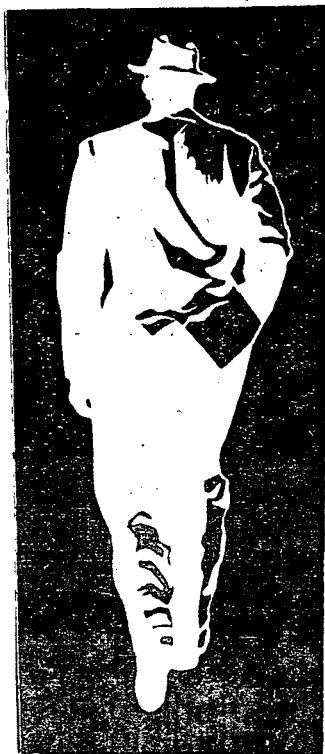
They were outside the units of the Palm Tree Motel. Mona Drew and George Silver had been told to remain inside their rooms. Neither was happy with the order; they figured they had a place in cop speculation. But the cop and the private detective did not need interruptions; they figured they already had enough problems. Mona Drew and George Silver could only complicate their thinking.

"The blackmailers could be amateurs, Will," Shayne said. "It's difficult for me to buy the thought, but they just could be. You read stories in the papers about their kind almost every day: the guy who figures he can frighten his victim into not going to the police, the guy who walks straight into a police trap. Ours could be just one shade brighter. They figure to send the cops on a wild goose chase to Flamingo Park, then change the site of the drop at the last second, not giving Mona Drew or Silver enough time to tip the police..."

Shayne let the words dribble off, wagged his head, "God, that smells!"

"Yeah," grunted Gentry.

"Okay, so what's the pitch?"



The police chief took the cigar stub from his mouth, tossed it away. "First, if the park drop is a ruse, if the dame or Silver gets another phone call, instructions about a new drop site, I've got it covered now. I've already checked a man into the unit next door to Silver and the manager of this place is being cooperative. We've got the phone lines fixed. Any calls in or out of Silver or

the dame's room will be monitored.

"Second, I've got other people on stakeout around here. Silver said he had the hundred grand in his room. Somebody could figure that, try a hit here tonight, walk up to Silver's door, stick a gun in his mug, and fly with the dough.

"Third, we'll flood the park in the morning. Fourth, the Reverend Frank Farryington is as clean as fresh lobster. He's in Europe with the kid choir. Interpol.

"Fifth, Tony Martini may have died from a smashed skull or suffered a fatal coronary before the beating. The medical boys aren't sure. From my point of view, it doesn't make much difference. Alive or dead, Martini was smashed, the killer was there. I still want that person. Sixth, where the hell do you figure to be in the morning, Mike?"

"In the park."

Gentry nodded. "One more isn't going to hurt. And, so far, the blackmailers don't seem to give a damn who knows what they're up to."

Shayne spent a restless night in his Second Avenue East apartment. He showered, shaved, drank two cognacs with ice water chasers, fixed a steak sandwich, then sprawled in a

deep chair before a Nightowl Movie that did not hold him. He put a tape on the stereo, cleaned the .45 and prowled. He thought about telephoning Lucy Hamilton, laying all of the blackmail scheme before her, getting it all out of his skull in order. But he discarded that idea quickly. It was one o'clock in the morning; Lucy would be asleep.

He went to the telephone, started to dial Tim Rourke's number. Rourke was a newspaperman and a good friend of long standing. Rourke lived out near Flamingo Park. Shayne hesitated, did not dial the last digit. He slapped the phone together, paced again. The movie had ended.

A blank television tube buzzed at him. He turned off the set, stood listening to the taped music for a moment, cut it off and went to bed. He dozed, tossed, dozed, turned, then finally deep sleep came. But he was awake at seven thirty. It was a bright Miami morning, a nice morning for any little caper a blackmailer might have in mind.

It was a morning made to order for an assassin, for that matter.

The sky was blue, the breeze gentle, the temperature a mild 72 degrees at eleven o'clock in Flamingo Park. The sun was

high, no glare problem to someone with an eye pressed against a telescopic sight, the light breeze eliminated calculation for wind allowance, and the temperature meant no sweat ball was going to slide down to blur a killer's vision.

Mona Drew walked through Flamingo Park at a pace that might lead one to think she had succumbed to the lazy day. She wore a lavender pantsuit and purple sunglasses, white sandals with bare toes sticking out. She carried a small suitcase in her right hand.

Sitting on a park bench about fifty yards away, watching her approach, Shayne admired her. George Silver knew of what he spoke: Mona Drew had super talent. She had to be frightened, she probably was quivering, but she looked totally relaxed, as if she was at peace with the world and everything in it.

Her head exploded as if it had been a melon with a small bomb ignited from the inside.

Shayne was off the bench and running hard with the crack of the rifle shot. The .45 was in his hand and a yell ripped from his throat as he streaked toward the suddenly sprawled body. He was oblivious of the cops who also were flooding in toward the inert figure in lavender.

The rifle slug had torn a

piece of flesh and hair from Mona Drew's head. She was face down, the wound bleeding profusely. The suitcase had been pitched into the grass during her sprawl.

Shayne knew before he touched her neck pulse that she was dead.

It was then that he became conscious of the shouts and confusion around him. Somewhere a man was sobbing. Shayne spotted Will Gentry first, then George Silver. Gentry was chest to chest with the agent, restraining him. Silver was bleached, his eyes round, mouth open, hacking sobs coming from him.

Two of Gentry's men took over for the chief and Gentry suddenly was free to whirl. He came to Shayne, got down on one knee, glanced at Mona Drew. Something gray in color had started to ooze from her head, mix with the flow of blood.

Gentry looked out across the park. "The shot came from over there," he rasped. "Across the street! The roof!"

Shayne bolted as if catapulted, cutting across grass and sending people sprawling from him. Now he was like a giant prow cutting through a tremendous wave. The curious were flowing toward the death site. But they parted as the redhead

streaked on long strides toward the assassin's vantage.

He reached the street, stopped. Traffic continued to flow, but the drivers had slowed. Everyone knew something had happened in Flamingo Park.

Shayne dashed in front of a slow-moving sedan, slid along the side of a station wagon, slapped a palm on the hood of a convertible and lifted his large body in a half broad jump. Then the traffic was coming at him from the opposite direction. Tires screeched, horns blared. He went across in front of a blue Ford and black VW, slapped a pink Chrysler past him and leaped up on the sidewalk.

He stopped, looked around. Pedestrians peeled away from him with tiny yelps and screeches. No one seemed to want anything to do with a looming redhead who wore a black scowl and carried a frightening .45 in his right fist.

Will Gentry surprised Shayne. He puffed up behind the redhead. "The roof," he wheezed. "I've got two people over here someplace!"

They entered the white building together, rode a slow-moving, self-service elevator to the top floor. Shayne shuffled all the way up,

hefting the .45. Gentry rasped, "Take it easy."

Then they were in a carpeted corridor with doors open and curious apartment dwellers hanging in the entries. It was obvious someone had been here before them. Shayne waved the gun at the curious. Some disappeared behind quickly snapped shut doors. Two hung tight, staring.

The redhead raced toward the red fire light at the end of the corridor. The door under the light was open. He shot onto an iron-slatted landing, looked up a short, iron ladder.

He scrambled up, poked his head over the edge of the parapet. Two men in business suits were prowling the rooftop. Both were armed. One whirled on the redhead and levelled a gun.

"Gentry's behind me!" Shayne yelled, going on up.

The cop tilted the muzzle of the gun skyward and let out a rattle of oaths. "Man, you almost got it!"

Shayne and Gentry searched the roof, found no one, but they were able to pinpoint the spot from where the rifleman had fired. It was a perfect sighting into Flamingo Park. The assassin had been able to track Mona Drew for about fifteen yards before squeezing off the shot.

Shayne felt frustrated and Will Gentry was angry.

"I should've smelled this out!" the police chief snarled. "Last night's call was an invitation to a murder! Nobody wanted money from Mona Drew! The blackmail was a ruse to draw her into the open! And the bastard had to have an audience!"

"The killing was a performance?" Shayne snapped.

"I'm going to tear that movie crowd apart at the seams!" Gentry-rasped.

He tore, badgered, browbeat for the remainder of the day. Shayne remained in the background, listening hard as Will Gentry hammered. They were at the movie shooting location, a side street where the producer had been given city permission to set up.

No one escaped Gentry's sharp questioning. Actors, actresses, technicians, cameramen, writers were accosted, quizzed, prodded. They were a stubborn lot, threatened lawsuits against the Miami police, charged brutality, but they bent. Slowly, Gentry ate them alive and sent them peddling.

A slight, slender, well-dressed man of thirty or so became the lone lingerer. Shayne watched him from the corner of his eye. The man seemed agitated, unsure of him-

self. He fidgeted, would move over to a cluster of those waiting to get in Gentry's line, then return, shuffle around, cast side glances at Shayne. Finally he approached the redhead.

"You're Mr. Shayne?" he asked in a voice that quivered. "Someone pointed you out. One of the police officers. My name is Wertz, Jerry Wertz. I am a script writer. I was a friend of Mona Drew's." He hesitated.

Shayne eyed Wertz hard. George Silver had labeled Wertz a swish. Jerry Wertz drew a long breath. He took a wallet from an inside coat pocket and removed all of the bills. He counted them carefully before passing them to Shayne.

"Here is \$545. If you will give me the address of your office I will come there in the morning, as soon as I can cash a check at a bank, and add an amount that will make the total \$5,000. I wish Mona Drew's killer tracked down and slain. I do not wish him apprehended and taken before a court. A brainwashed jury could free him."

"Keep your dough, Wertz. I don't kill."

"Mr. Shayne, this man is to die!"

"Forget it."

"Then I shall have to perform the task myself," said



Wertz, suddenly returning the money to the wallet. He slid the wallet out of sight. "The thought is distasteful, but death must come to this person."

"Will," Shayne called out. The redhead took Jerry Wertz' soft bicep in a firm grip and piloted the writer to the police chief. Gentry didn't change expression as Shayne laid out the writer's want. The chief called for two detectives and thumbed Wertz away with them.

"Please!" Wertz screamed.

"It's for your own good, Wertz," Gentry growled.

Gentry did not find the assassin. It was after eight o'clock in the evening when he and Shayne stomped side by side into police headquarters to be accosted by Tim Rourke, the veteran *Miami Daily News* reporter.

Rourke was hungry, but not for food. "Hey, you two, I've got a reputation to keep! A movie star—an Academy Award winner, yet—is assassinated practically under my bedroom window and I hear about it at the office!"

"So tell your troubles to your boss. I've got plenty of my own," Gentry grumbled, brushing the reporter aside as he plowed toward his private office.

Rourke lifted eyebrows at Shayne. The redhead said, "It's

a nasty one, Tim. Will got an invite to the killing. He's hot."

Rourke had been a reporter for years and in all of that time he had never known another Miami chief of police. He respected Gentry as a policeman as much as he respected Shayne as a private detective. Beyond respect was friendship. Thus, Rourke did not press. "Okay, Mike, can I help?"

"Yeah," Shayne said. "Maybe we need a listener."

They entered Gentry's office. The chief was deep in the chair behind his desk, scowling. Shayne took one of the chairs in front of the desk. Rourke stood against a wall in a favored position.

"Let's put it all out, Will," Shayne said. "Your side, my side. Let Tim sift it. He's fresh. He may spot something we're missing."

The cleansing did nothing. Rourke merely stood braced against the wall and frowned for a long time after Gentry and Shayne had finished talking before he said, "Martini's killer, the assassin, could be anyone. Perhaps not even the same person. Martini could've been killed by someone who walked in off the street, someone with a beef against him, someone totally unrelated to the assassination, maybe, as Mike speculated, his landlady, a spurned

Liz Walker. On the other hand, there isn't much doubt about Mona Drew. She was set up. Lured into the park to be killed. Her death was the objective. The blackmail was bait."

"Tim," said Shayne, "what do you know about various cults in town?"

"The guy in the white robe, huh?" Rourke shifted his feet and pulled at his lower lip. "Well, we've got a sect here and there. But nothing big. Nothing like I hear they have in New York or out in California."

"We sleep on it," Gentry decided abruptly. He stood behind the desk. "We can't do any more tonight. Maybe something will fall into place tomorrow."

"What happened to Silver?" Shayne wanted to know.

"Got him under wraps at the motel," said the chief. "I hope he's getting drunk out of his mind. I plan on grilling him tomorrow."

"Do you spot any gain for him in Mona Drew's death, Will?" Shayne asked speculatively.

Gentry narrowed his eyes. "Do you?"

"No." Shayne shook his head, still in thought. "But he's got the green to set it up, hire a killer."

"I've debated that angle," Gentry nodded. "And I'll debate it some more, in my sleep."



Beat it, you two. I've got some cleaning up to do here."

Tim Rourke walked with Shayne out of the headquarters building. It was a dark, warm night now, no moon, but the stars were high. They turned around a corner of the building and entered the shadowed parking lot. Rourke angled away from the detective with a wave.

Shayne reached the side of his topdown convertible and stopped in his tracks. He gripped the edge of the car hard with both hands, fingers working, as he stared at the form stretched out on the front seat.

"Tim!" he yelled.

X

THE WOMAN stretched out on the front seat of Mike Shayne's car had been bludgeoned to

death. Her skull had been smashed into pulp. And tied by its feet around her neck was a headless chicken. Neither the woman nor the chicken had been dead long.

The woman's body still was pliable; the chicken still dribbled blood.

Shayne found the scrawled note tied to a chicken leg. The note said: *Here's your assassin—an evil woman.*

Will Gentry fumed. "Who is she, Mike?"

The redhead continued to study the corpse in the light of the floodlamps that had been set up. He was positive he did not know the woman, yet she looked familiar. He took the folded photograph of the topless dancer he had found in Tony Martini's room from his coat pocket, opened it, compared.

"Marnie Swing," he said. "The dancer."

"Okay," snapped Gentry to no one in particular. "That's it. I want this town combed. I want everyone who's ever laid eyes on this dame hauled in. And that includes bar jerks. I want the topless joints closed down, and I want those people down here before dawn! And that's an order."

Cops moved. The movements were jerky in the beginning, then smoothed out as

organization took over. Cops flowed. Night people were roused, hustled downtown. The line outside Gentry's office gradually became longer. Shayne and Tim Rourke remained in the background, watching the parade, listening to the beefs, the pleas, the excuses, the whines, shrills of indignation. But no one, including an assistant manager at The Stable, Marnie Swing's last known place of employment, had known the dancer intimately, it seemed, at least not intimately enough to have even the vaguest notion who might want Marnie dead.

Until Bright Flame landed.

Bright Flame was six feet two inches tall and lush in body and mouth. The mouth easily was the most predominate feature of her painted face.

Bright Flame came on strong. She had been hustled in the front door of the police station by two plainclothed detectives, but she wasn't standing in line for anyone. She barged into Gentry's office, stopped short inside the door and shot a withering look at the little man who occupied the chair in front of Gentry's desk—Willie the Pimp, who professed not to know a single hustler in town.

"Scram, Willie," Bright Flame snarled.

Willie sat like stone until

Gentry nodded. Willie sailed, and Bright Flame folded with natural flourish into the chair he had vacated, crossed her knees professionally, then leaned forward. "Okay, copper, give. Who killed Marnie?"

"Name?" snapped Gentry.

"Mine?" Bright Flame looked mildly surprised. "God, are you that straight?"

"Name!"

"Bright Flame."

"This isn't a stage."

"Agnes Flower."

"Occupation?"

"Aw, come on, chief."

"Professional hustler."

"Professional dancer!"

"Where?"

"Purple Pit."

"Topless?"

"Tell me you know a girl who can make a buck with her clothes on these days, chief? Who killed Marnie?"

"You knew Marnie?"

"Christ, I roomed with her, man!"

Shayne pushed from the wall.

Bright Flame shot him a look. "Hiyuh."

"Flame," he nodded.

"How come they never sent you around to bust me?" she said.

"I appeal, huh?" Shayne said, grabbing the opening.

"Yeah, man. You're big like me."

"You and Marnie. Swing were sharing a pad?"

"I already told you. Jeez, I wish they would send you around sometime, man. I bet we'd never make it back to this trap! You should see the little guys I get. Creeps that don't even hardly come up to my shoulders!"

"How many times you been busted, Flame?"

"You don't have enough fingers and toes to count 'em, Red."

"How long have you been living with Marnie?"

"Three, four months. I dunno. Why?"

"Is Margaret Swing her real name?"

"Well, sure! That's kind of a stupid thing to ask."

"She have boy friends?"

"Naw."

"Girl friends?"

"Naw."

"Johns?"

"Hey now, that's getting a little personal!"

"A John could've killed her, Flame."

"Naw. I'd rather think it was the creep."

"Who?"

"The creep. Jesus. You know."

"I don't know, Flame."

"He parades around in sloppy sandals and a robe."

"A white robe?"

"I'd say gray."

"Does he have a beard?"

"He looks like Christ, man!"

"What's his name?"

"I dunno."

"Where's his pad?"

"The Dolphin."

"That's a pretty high class apartment."

"Ain't it."

"You been there. I mean up to—"

"Naw. I like straights."

Bright Flame grinned suddenly, "with red hair. I prefer red hair."

"Flame," Shayne pressed, "did Marnie have an interest in cults?"

Bright Flame flipped a hand, looked off into space. "You know, I've never figured that cult route. What's so special? Voodoo. That went out with brick streets, didn't it?"

"No," Shayne said bluntly.

Bright Flame looked him straight in the eye. "It didn't? Well, hell, maybe I've been miss-in' something."

"Marnie went for voodoo."

"She was sorta hung up on the stuff, yeah."

"With the creep. Marnie ever live on the west coast?"

"Yeah. California once."

"When?"

"Long time ago. I dunno when."

"She ever try out for movies?"

"Said she did, but I never paid much attention when she got to talkin' about the old days. We've all got old days. Point is you gotta live now, right?"

"This creep. He and Marnie were old pals?"

"Seemed like it."

"How'd you meet her?"

"She came into the Pit lookin' for work."

"And got it?"

"For a few weeks."

"You two teamed up, huh?"

"Yeah."

"Then Marnie got the chop."

"There were other places. She worked."

"Why was she chopped?"

"Red, look girls are built different, you know? I mean some girls can play it cool. Some can't. Some just get excited, naturally. Get carried away with their work, so to speak."

"You?"

"I've been around too long."

"Marnie?"

"Yeah, she'd get a little carried away once in a while."

"Was she an exhibitionist, Flame?"

"What the hell does that mean?"

"Brenda Helm."

"Huh?"

"Brenda Helm."

"Hey, how did you know about that?"

"Marnie, on the west coast, in the old days, was Brenda Helm."

"So? Lots of people change names for one reason or another."

"Brenda Helm supposedly was killed in an automobile wreck."

"You know about that, too, huh? Well, it was another Brenda Helm, copper."

"Or was Brenda in the wreck, escaped injury, and switched identification with her friend?"

"You got a very long nose, haven't you?"

"How come she switched, Flame?"

"I dunno. Not really. She said it came on her in a flash. She'n this other cat rolled in a car. They were out in the boon-docks someplace, nobody around for miles. Brenda said she got this flash, wanted to start out fresh somewhere, have a new name. Hell, I dunno what really made her do it."

"You girls seemed to have talked a lot."

"We didn't have many secrets from each other, copper. Everybody has to have a shoulder to lean on somewhere."

"You two ever talk about Mona Drew?"

"The cat who got killed in Flamingo today? Yeah."

"Marnie and Mona once were roommates too."

"Yeah, I know."

"When Marnie was Brenda."

"Un-huh, she told me about that. And I've got news for you, too, copper: this Mona Drew wasn't all honey. In fact, she was a sneaky bitch."

"Marnie told you that."

"Well, she'd know!"

"They were college room-mates."

"Yeah!"

"Both on a rifle team."

"But Marnie was better than Mona Drew! She said she was!"

"She showed her skill today, okay."

"Huh? Hey, wait a minute! Are you saying—"

"I'm saying, Flame," Shayne nodded.

"Jeez," Bright Flame breathed. "Marnie shot the cat? Marnie an assassin? Wow!"

"Let's go, Will," Shayne said grimly. "I think I'm beginning to get the picture."

The Dolphin bordered on opulence. A retired jeweler with a beautiful silver mustache and his wife of forty five years, with beautiful silver hair could live out their winter years comfortably and quietly on the top floor. A young playboy businessman with inherited assets and married to a young, jetset playgirl with body assets could launch theirs with the seasons

from the third deck. And in between, a shady cult could really thrive.

Shayne, Rourke and Gentry—the latter with a squad of stonefaced detectives trailing—invaded the cult headquarters at two o'clock in the morning. They roused an elderly ex-wino who had long, flowing white hair and who was the high priest, and a youthful ex-Marine, who had a tangled nest of dirty brown hair and was dangerous.

The young man danced on dirty feet before them, swinging a black sap around and around his head. His eyes held a wild look. He hissed between widely separated teeth.

Shayne measured the young man carefully, crouched slightly. He took in the ornate room with a swift inventorying glance, recognizing the wall niche tabernacles and weird array of bottled potions, chicken heads and burning candles. At some time, Tony Martini, who had been totally captivated by Brenda Helm, had been allowed inside this apartment, and he had photographed, probably incognito. Tony had been tolerated because he had value. He could produce in a darkroom, and Brenda Helm—long ago—had stolen negatives.

"I told you it wouldn't

work, Arnie!" screamed the elderly man.

"Pigs!" shrieked the youth, continuing to flail the black sap around his head wildly. "She ruined everything! We could've been rich! But she had to kill! Kill, kill, kill—that's all she knew! Revenge! Kill!"

Shayne moved in low. He was crouched, keeping an eye on the whirling sap. He shot a fist forward into the young man's middle. And the sap came down hard on his shoulder, driving him to the carpeting.

Then a gunshot filled his ears, reverberated, blocked out all other sound. He felt a light tap on the back of his skull as he ate carpeting. A heavy weight dropped on him. He grunted and flipped. The weight left him and he rolled up on an elbow to see the young man flop. Blood was gushing from a hole in the young man's leg.

Shayne looked at Gentry. The police chief stood with a service revolver in his right hand.

Suddenly, off in a corner somewhere, the old man bubbled: "Arnie wanted bread, just the bread! My son didn't want to kill!"

"And Marnie wanted revenge, just revenge," Shayne rasped.

"She was an evil woman!"



"The chicken, Pop?" Shayne said.

"The chicken carries away the evil spirits, my boy!"

When Shayne, Gentry and Rourke were able to convene in peace, it was a few minutes past four-thirty o'clock in the morning and outside the police headquarters windows an orange-pink was beginning to spread across the black sky.

Rourke said with a sigh, "Can't one of you guys summarize for me, just lay it out nice and neat and simple?"

Gentry grunted, toyed with the coffee mug in his fingers. Shayne tried the coffee one more time. It was yesterday's police brew, bitter. He pushed the mug aside and yanked at his earlobe.

"You cut out the frills, Tim, and it comes down to a simple case of Brenda Helm—who had not been killed in an auto wreck, in spite of what Mona Drew had heard—owning a stolen negative she'd kept for years, waiting her chance. At one time, she probably figured she'd make Mona pay in green for aceing her out of that movie role long ago. But as the years passed, the fester swelled. Brenda's anger, thoughts of vengeance deepened. All of Mona's publicity must have grated hard. And then suddenly Bren-

da had her opportunity. Mona Drew was in Miami, making a picture.

"In the meantime, however, she had become caught up with Arnie, his father, and the voodoo business, and Arnie spotted the negative of Mona Drew and Donald Farryington as a path to Easy Street. He used Martini, Brenda's pal. He got Martini to make prints from the old negative. Martini smelled potential too, but was killed by Arnie because he sniffed a little bit too hard.

"Then Brenda really tossed Arnie a curve. She invited cops to Flamingo Park and she assassinated Mona. An exhibitionist is an exhibitionist.

"Okay, Arnie blew his cork. A dead Mona Drew was of zilch value. He'd been cheated, and vengeance also flared in him. So he killed Brenda."

"Ugh." It was all Tim Rourke said.

Shayne reached for the mug of coffee reflexively, sat back, sipped, gulped. "Will, that's gotta be the lousiest coffee in town."

"Somebody'll brew a fresh pot within the next hour, Mike."

"You don't mind if I don't wait?"

"Not at all. Be my guest. Go home."

# Harry's Ghost

*Out of the dark it came, a shape  
not quite human. She laughed  
nervously. "Dead men rise up never."  
Then she saw the face and screamed.*

by TALMAGE POWELL



IT WASN'T long until Harry's ghostly visitation became the focus of Miss Annie's life. If several evenings passed

without a sign from him, she lamented her loneliness, being one of those little gray women whose chains of affection are forged from tears and silken-soft recriminations.

Life had certainly changed for Miss Annie after the advent of Harry. It was no longer a dull gray abyss. Nothing in this three-dimensional realm could equal the experience of having a real live ghost for one's own, especially one as nice as Harry. And only the confirmed addict of an hallucinatory drug might have comprehended Miss Annie's wracking anxieties during those periods when Harry refused to appear.

Then, just as Miss Annie was about to succumb to despair, the first swirl of ectoplasm would glimmer in the narrow, dark hallway or in a corner of the kitchen.

Miss Annie would rise from her inner ashes, blood stirring in her old, stiff veins, the most delicious fright and fascination searing through her brittle bones and wrinkled-parchment tissues.

Neither her reaction nor Harry's existence perturbed her in the least. It was inconceivable that anyone could fail to respond to such a dear as Harry. And on the second point, Harry's existence, to Miss Annie's way of thinking, was no more surprising than this year's rebirth of the tiger lily that had died last autumn.

"Harry?" she would say through the pulse beating in her



thin, bony neck. Then her dentures would click as her soft, chiding smile belied her sternly wagging finger: "You've been a very naughty young man, Harry, staying

away so long. I was on the point of moving out, like the others. How would you like that?"

The quick shimmering of ectoplasm hinted that he wouldn't like it at all. He partially succeeded in materializing there in the dim hallway, a quivering, uncertain image of a tall, thin, clean cut young man with dark hair and the imprint

of deep sorrow on his gaunt face.

He was trying to tell her something. He was always trying to tell her.

She stood with eyes enrapt, her heart beating in wild excitement. From crown to toe she came to tingling life. Emotions, long banked like embers of half-forgotten fires, sputtered and flamed. She ached with the desire to know his secret, but she was in the same moment torn with the fear that if he ever managed to reveal it he would go away forever.

"Harry . . ." She could barely whisper above her shortness of breath. "What is it like? Is there day and night? Cold and hot? Harry, please!"

But his grip weakened on forces beyond her own space-time continuum, and his already-fuzzy image melted and slipped away, until there was just a wisp of ectoplasm coiling and writhing a dozen feet from her face.

"Oh, Harry . . . Harry . . ." she sobbed faintly, and then the hallway was quite empty.

Miss Annie returned to limp awareness of her surroundings. With a petulant little sigh, she turned toward the living room. It hadn't been a good visitation, not at all. If Harry would only try as hard to get here as she

expended the effort to bring him—

She started slightly as the front door chimes sounded. Frowning at the unexpected event of someone calling on her, she crossed the living room.

She opened the door on a tall, lean young man who was dressed in dark denim slacks and a blue peajacket.

"Miss Annie Loxton?"

She nodded, struck by the strange sense of familiarity aroused by his gaunt face and shock of dark hair.

"I'm Horace Grimshaw," he said. "Harry's brother."

That explained it. She expelled a tiny breath. Peered at closely, he wasn't Harry at all. Though similar on the surface, the cast of Horace's features, the charisma, contrasted with Harry. Horace was tougher, that was the word. Harder bitten. More capable of meeting the world's cruelty headon.

"If you don't mind, Miss Annie," he was saying, "I'd like to talk to you."

"Of course," she said quickly. "Do come in."

He surveyed the modest living room with a glance as he entered. This was the first time he'd been in the house where Harry had died, and a tightness tugged the corner of his mouth.

"Please sit down, Mr. Grim-

shaw. Would you like some coffee?"

"No, thanks. Just some talk about Harry, if it's okay."

She nodded, watching him sit down in the barrel-backed chair near the window. He was bigger boned than Harry. Big knuckles. Big wrists thrusting a half-inch from the sleeves of the worn seaman's jacket as he bent his arms and rested his elbows on the chairarms.

"I didn't know that Harry had a brother," she said.

"We haven't seen each other in a long while. I was working on a scabby island freighter in the Celebes and Banda Seas when news of his death finally reached me."

She slipped into a chair opposite him, blue-veined, chicken-claw old hands folded tightly in her lap. She saw the grief-darkness in his face, and she felt she should say something. But she didn't know what would be entirely appropriate. The dull gray years, devoid of human fellowship and communication, had hardly trained her in the art of consoling a saddened stranger.

He pushed aside his remote moment, lifting his eyes. "They say that Harry killed himself."

"Yes," she murmured.

"Here in this house. In the basement. They say he hanged himself in the basement."

"Please, Mr. Grimshaw. It happened weeks ago. It's all over and done."

His weather-tanned young face studied her a moment. His lips had the look of being chiseled from ice. For an instant, he was just a little frightening.

"I knew my brother, Miss Annie. I don't believe he would have done such a thing. I don't honestly think he had the guts."

Her watery blue eyes glanced away. She was beginning to dislike Harry's brother. To talk of Harry in such terms, as if it was Horace who possessed all the intestinal fortitude in the family.

"You rented the house to him," Horace said.

"Yes," Miss Annie nodded. "To him and his wife. She left him shortly afterward, for another man, I think. He continued on in a bachelor existence, with a cleaning woman in twice a week. It was she who found him—the cleaning woman, I mean. Later, Harry's ex-wife came and claimed their things."

"Do you know where she is now?"

"No, Mr. Grimshaw. Such affairs are not my business. She had a legal paper. She took their belongings. That's the last I've seen of her."

He'd assessed Miss Annie's tone.

"Good riddance?" he suggested.

She refolded her hands.

"If you wish to put it that way," she said stiffly. "I think your brother was a far finer person than his wife was."

"Were you here when she took the things away?"

"Naturally, and so was a detective. I rented the house partially furnished, and I had to watch after my own things. Later..."

"Yes, Miss Annie?"

She straightened her thin shoulders an inch. "Well, the next two tenants didn't stay long. They—they claimed Harry was still here, making little noises in the plaster and sometimes glowing in the dark. Well, not glowing exactly. Kind of a shower of sparks. Like those childrens' toys, sparklers."

He waited, and she felt the need to break the sudden silence.

She stifled her sense of aggravation with him and forced herself to speak calmly. "I didn't believe it myself, Mr. Grimshaw. But the tenants kept running, so to speak, and I had to have my rents. My father left me three little cottages like this one. It's all I have. So, if I could not keep this one rented, I

decided to move in myself and rent out the one in which I'd lived. It worked out nicely. Good tenants in the other places, and I like it here, very much."

"Even with Harry around?"

She bristled inwardly at the faint scorn in his voice, but before she could tell him how much she like having Harry around, he was on a new tack.

"My brother worked for an outfit called Happy Havens, I believe."

"An executive director," Miss Annie said proudly. "And a wonderful organization it is, too. They build and support nursing homes, for helpless senior citizens without kin or money."

"They'd conducted a big fund drive just before Harry's death," Horace said. "Is that correct?"

"Yes, that is true."

"And forty thousand dollars showed up short when all the collections were in and the kitty totalled up."

Miss Annie looked at the pulsing blue veins on her tight knuckles and wished Horace would go away.

Remorse over the forty thousand in embezzled funds was what had killed Harry. Too nice. Too fine. Too decent and honest to go against his own conscience, no matter what had

been his reasons in his once-in-a-lifetime moment of weakness and temptation.

"The police tell me, Miss Annie, that they never did recover the forty thousand. Could Harry have reconciled with his wife? She's quite a beauty, I hear. Could she have talked to him, coaxed him, worn him down, conned him into taking the money?"

"A Jezebel," Miss Annie whispered. "Filthy creature of her sex!"

"What was that, Miss Annie?"

"I think," she said, lifting her eyes, "that Harry was deeply infatuated with her at one time, but I think he got over her when she left."

"You saw him often?"

"Whenever I collected the rents."

"But you noticed a change in him?"

"Yes. He seemed harried, absent-minded when I first rented them the house. After she left he seemed to find a sense of relief. His color was better. He gained a little weight."

He cut a side glance. "You seem to have noticed a lot, Miss Annie."

"I was fond of your brother, Mr. Grimshaw. He didn't treat me like a prune-faced landlady. In all my life—"



Again he waited. And she pinked, wondering how she could be so open to a perfect stranger.

"I won't trouble you with the details of my life, Mr. Grimshaw. Sufficient to say that I was a shy, sickly, ugly little girl. My mother died, and I never escaped the shadow of my father, who rather despised me and felt that I was incapable of coping with the world. To sum up, it hasn't been much of a life, and your brother was one of the rare people who looked at me and saw a person, who seemed to understand—"

She broke off. Horace, unlike his brother, lacked that particular empathy. Horace's eyes held a nearly hidden chill,



as if he found her soft voice repugnant.

"If there's nothing more, Mr. Grimshaw—"

But before she could rise and dismiss him, he said, "There is more. A lot more. In seaman's language, I'm not—but I'd better not use any seaman's language, Miss Annie. Let's just say that I'm not satisfied with a lot of things."

"As?"

"The note my brother was supposed to have left, for one thing. The suicide note, saying he had stolen the money, realized later that he was bound to get caught, and simply couldn't stand the prospect of scandal, shame, and prison." The chair creaked slightly under his shifting weight. "The note was typewritten, Miss Annie. Anyone can type a note."

"But it had his signature."

"Which gets us to the nitty-gritty," he said. "If Harry didn't take the money or write the note, then it had to be someone who had both access to the money and to Harry's signature so it could be copied."

"You're dismissing his wife?"

"For the moment. The other angle narrows down the suspects to people within or close to Happy Havens. How many people were there in executive

directorships or posts above that?"

"Three at the time, I think. Harry, and a Mr. Philbin, and Mr. James Fellows who lives third house down the street," Miss Annie said. "Harry and Mr. Fellows used to take turns driving their cars and riding to work together."

"And while they're riding along," Horace said, "this guy, Fellows, sick to death with the boring details and fawning over contributors and the low pay that goes with every charity job, this guy decides to grab a big fat plum while he's got the chance to use the trusting, dumb cluck on the car seat beside him for a fall guy."

"But the police—"

"Do their routine and are promptly swamped with a dozen, a hundred, a million other crimes. Sure, they look for the missing money. They figure every place Harry might have put it. They go over every crack here in the house he occupied. But he is hanging by the neck in his own basement and a note with his signature says he did it and the missing money is another unanswered detail in an already cluttered file."

"But they questioned the others!"

"For hours," Horace agreed. "Probably searched their prem-

ises, too. And no doubt really put the ex-wife over the coals. But the question of the money remains, and if I knew that soft-sister Harry he would have gone crawling back with it instead of killing himself."

Miss Annie thought: Philbin? She knew him only through Happy Havens publicity releases that had appeared in the newspapers. A frail little man, very old, very gray. Far too weak to have hanged Harry.

Fellows? James Fellows? A far different case, indeed! He had been here a time or two when she'd dropped by for the rent. Big, jovial. Too hearty, that was Fellows. The back-slapper. The glad-hander.

Oh, by all means, now that she came to think of it. Fellows. A big, broad smile for big contributors whose wealth he secretly envied. An ogling phony and four flusher, her instincts had told her that the first time she'd met him.

"A penny, Miss Annie?" Horace's words nudged into her thoughts.

"For my thoughts?" She arose stiffly, and crossed to the window. She slipped back the drape and looked at the Fellows house down the street. Modest, like the rest of them on the block. But the lawn needed cutting, and there was Mrs. Fellows coming out the front

door. Sexpot blonde in those dreadful hotpants. Cheap and vulgar. Crossing to the Fellows car, which was too flashy for Mr. Fellows's salary.

Miss Annie recognized her suspicion as just that. A suspicion. But it was possible. Fellows was cunning enough and strong enough to have pulled it off. Fellows could have taken the money and before the theft was discovered he could have strolled over for a chat with Harry that unspeakable evening.

Fellows could easily have overpowered an unsuspecting Harry, knocked him out, carried him unconscious to the basement. When he departed, Fellows could have left the forged suicide note which he'd prepared in advance. And Harry, slowly turning left and slowly turning right, his neck secured by the rope to the overhead waterpipe.

Then Fellows simply waits, bides his time until the "heat was off" as the late movies put it. In due time Fellows manages to get himself fired at Happy Havens and, quite naturally, fades from sight—with his blonde and the forty thousand dollars bought with Harry's life.

Miss Annie didn't know she was biting her knuckles until Horace tapped her shoulder and said sharply, "Miss Annie, what

is this you're mumbling? About Harry being here, about Harry trying to tell you — ?”

She turned, tears in irregular course on the bleached crocodile leather of her face. “He is here, Mr. Grimshaw. Harry really is here. If you don't believe me, ask the previous tenants, the ones who rented the house after he was hanged.”

Horace was stilled for a moment. He crept a glance over his shoulder.

“I don't see him, Miss Annie.”

“Oh, for heaven's sake,” she shrieked, jerking away from his touch. “You're like so many other people. To you, I'm just an old prune-face. Pixillated now. Old, you know. A little cracked. Imagining things. Well, I don't imagine a blessed thing, you foolish and cruel young man. I don't see Harry, either, when he isn't there. Only when he is able to materialize. But not with creakings in the walls, not as a dime store sparkler in the dark. Not with me, young fellow! Harry and I understand each other, something that you would never comprehend. With understanding, Harry and I have almost bridged the gap.”

She hobbled over to a chair, feeling suddenly weak.

“Miss Annie—”

“No! Just go. You don't believe and—”

“But maybe I do, Miss Annie.” His shadow fell across her chair. I've seen some kookie things in the Celebes. Things I can't account for. Things science can't explain. Miss Annie, let me come back. If my brother is present, you owe me the privilege of coming back.”

She didn't want him to come back. She didn't want him around. She was content to be alone in the house, with Harry's ghost.

She drew her head to one side, looking up at him from the corners of her eyes. He seemed quite serious, not making fun of her at all.

“Harry was all the kin I had, Miss Annie. Parents dead. No wife. No real friends. Just some guys and chicks I knew knocking around in the south seas. Nobody but Harry, Miss Annie.”

“Very well,” she relented reluctantly. “You may come and see him—if he appears.”

“Does he favor certain times?”

“Not precisely. He doesn't call by appointment.”

“Certain places here in the house?”

“The hallway, the kitchen, and the basement, where he was hanged.”

“Murdered, Miss Annie.”

“Murdered,” she said.

They sat quietly in the confines of the basement with its earthen smell and feel of dusty cobwebs. It was the second evening in a row that they'd sat here for two-hour stretches. Eight o'clock to ten o'clock each night. Thinking back over the visitations, Miss Annie had concluded that Harry favored the hour of nine. It was the hour, the coroner had officially reported, when Harry's life had been surrendered to the length of rope and water pipe. They sat on two old water pipe.

They sat on two old kitchen chairs that had been stored in the basement, just the two of them. Miss Annie near the foot of the narrow, steep stairs and Horace a few feet away. There was no sign of Harry, and nothing broke the silence, until Horace remarked, "Not like a regular seance, Miss Annie. No tilting table. No joining of hands and calling up the spirits."

"I don't believe in such humbug, Horace."

"Neither do I."

"Now and then a being such as Harry is forced to return. That's what I believe. And dishes fly off the shelves to make a poltergeist's presence known."

"It's happened in some well-authenticated instances."

Horace agreed, "with even hard-headed cops and newspaper reporters on hand to witness the knockings."

Miss Annie's silence dropped the subject. In a moment, she stirred, watching the brief emergence of Horace's hard-bitten young face in the glow of his cigarette.

"Horace?"

"Yes, Miss Annie?"

"Was there bad blood between you and Harry?"

"Why do you ask, Miss Annie?"

"I'm not sure, except that he doesn't seem inclined to appear while you're present."

"No, Miss Annie. Nothing like that. Frankly, I used to make him out a sissy sometimes, but I think that deep down he knew that I did admire other qualities he had."

"Then we shall wait."

"Right on, Miss Annie."

He finished his cigarette and ground it under his heel.

"It's after nine, Miss Annie. I don't think—"

"Shhhh!" It was a softly barked expletive, cutting him short, freezing him in his chair. "I feel that strange warmth, Horace, that tingling of life, that sensation quite unlike any other I've ever known ... There, Horace! Near the water heater!"

Horace stumbled to his feet,

toppling his chair. In the dim corner at which Miss Annie was pointing the first thin tendril of ectoplasm threshed like the body of a headless, silvery glowing snake.

The manifestation eeled and crawled its way through the space-time warp. It grew, eddied, steadied. It strained itself into shape, shimmering unsteadily.

"Harry," Miss Annie said to the image, "your brother Horace has come all the way from the south seas to see you."

The image quivered a greeting to Horace, and Horace, supporting himself with one hand against a brick pillar, got his sea legs under him.

"Hello, Harry," Horace said. "I'm sorry it has to be like this, under these circumstances."

Harry darkened, sharing Horace's sentiment.

Horace had strength to push away from the basement support.

"I want to help you, Harry. I know it must be hell, trapped the way you are," Horace said.

Harry brightened perceptibly.

"Okay," Horace said on a deep breath, "I know you can't stick around long at a time, so let's hit the point. You can move up and down, and you can move side to side. I've got

some questions. Move up and down for a yes answer, side to side for a no. Can do?"

Harry moved up and down fitfully.

"Swell," Horace said. "First off, were you murdered?"

Yes, Harry replied.

"By your wife?"

No.

"By someone at Happy Havens who wanted to steal money safely, using you for a patsy?"

Yes, Harry answered with a quick up-down bob of his disembodied reflection.

"Was it James Fellows?"

Yes, yes, yes!

Miss Annie was drawing to her feet, breathless spectator, her gaze dashing from brother to brother.

"Fellows is now just waiting his chance to leave without suspicion," Horace pressed on, "taking the forty thousand dollars with him?"

Yes, Harry replied.

"You must get around in a brand new way nowadays," Horace said. "Walls can't stop you. Have you looked in on the Fellowses?"

Yes.

"Do you know where he's got the money hidden?"

Yes.

Horace paused, taking breath. Harry could signal only positive or negative responses,

and Horace spent a moment framing his questions.

"Is the money stashed in a safety deposit box?"

No.

"Bus station locker, maybe?" Horace said.

No.

"In his house?"

Yes, yes!

"None of the usual hiding places," Horace mused to himself, "or the cops would have found it."

"Horace," Miss Annie remarked, "Harry is slipping away. He's barely hanging on. I can tell."

"Harry, stick with us," Horace pleaded. "If all the furniture were taken out of the house, would the money still be in there?"

Yes.

"In the attic?"

No.

"Basement?"

No.

"In the walls?"

No.

Horace looked a bit helplessly at Miss Annie. "What other parts of a house—" He suddenly bit the words off, snapped his fingers. Then asked, "The floor, Harry?"

Yes.

"He spread the money and hid it with an inlay of fresh tile?"

No. And again No, as if



Horace were the biggest dummy on the high seas.

"Then the carpet..." Horace said. "Sure! Fellows just

loosened the edge of the carpet, rolled it back, spread the money, and then refastened the wall-to-wall carpeting!"

Yes. In capitals. A bob from floor to partially through the ceiling. Then the movement became a swirl, and the swirl a vortex, and the vortex was sucked into empty space. Harry was gone, and a silence came to the basement.

Miss Annie felt Horace's touch on her arm. They looked at each other in the dimness filtering down the narrow stairs. Then, silently, they started up, Miss Annie in the lead.

When they were halfway up, Horace remarked, "Somehow we've got to figure a way to get the police to roll back every inch of floor covering in the Fellows house. Can't very well tell them a ghost told us to do so."

"No, we can't," Miss Annie agreed. She struggled to the top of the stairs, reaching for the door jamb.

"We'll figure a way," Horace said confidently, "even if I have to sneak into the Fellows house when they're away and call the cops from there, after I've uncovered the money. And the money will put the guilt where it belongs."

"It surely will, Horace," said Miss Annie.

"And that will certainly

balance whatever cosmic forces we're dealing with. Don't you see? Harry is trapped where he is, but when we restore the cosmic balance, it should release Harry, forever."

Framed in the doorway at the top of the stairs, Miss Annie stopped and turned.

"What is this you're saying, Horace?"

A couple of stair treads below her, he looked up at her wiry figure.

"I'm an amateur at this sort of thing, exorcising ghosts, getting messages from the great beyond," he admitted. "But we can be sure of one thing. Harry is stuck. And Harry is tormented with the need to see his murderer brought to justice. And while he was visible to us, he gave me the strongest impression that justice for his murderer would complete the equation, put things in balance. He was trying to let me, his brother, know that it was the one way I could help him get unstuck. I'm certain of that."

"Justice for his murderer," Miss Annie murmured, "and Harry is chased away for good."

"Released, Miss Annie," Horace corrected. "He'll never bother you again or chase away another tenant."

"I'm sorry, Horace," Miss Annie said in the instant that she put out her hands and



pushed him with all her wiry old strength.

She saw the look of surprise on his face as Horace went over backward and fell all the way to the bottom, bumping and banging. She flinched when his head struck the bottom step and he came to rest in an awkward pile of outflung arms and twisted legs.

She slipped down the stairs quickly. She'd expected, at the very least, that the fall would stun him, give her the advantage, offer her time enough to grab the handaxe from the tool cabinet and finish the job. But as she knelt beside him, she saw that the most, not the least, had happened. He was dead. His skull had cracked and was seeping red.

Now all that remained was the burial of Horace; here in the basement. He had no relatives, no friends. He was a stranger in the city for whom no one would come asking. No one would ever know.

Then, still in her kneeling posi-

tion beside Horace, she sensed a presence. She turned her head a few inches and in the further corner of the basement, she saw the first spark, a little burst of stardust against the darkness.

"Harry," she said, rising slowly and reaching out entreating hands, "I simply had to do it. I couldn't take a chance that Horace was right, that you'd go away if Fellows was brought to justice. I'd die, Harry, before I'd risk the destrucion of the only relationship I ever had..."

Her words faltered. The nice, strange warmth had failed to come. Instead, a breath of inter-spacial zero oozed through the basement.

And she knew. As the form before her materialized, the full truth flowed suddenly through her mind. This wasn't Harry. This was Horace, trapped hellishly in cosmic imbalance. This was a Horace transformed to raw wrath and a dark, boundless thirst for revenge.

And Miss Annie started screaming.



Soon—Another **DETECTIVES BY GASLIGHT** Story

*A ghost in the night he was, a silent blood brother of death, with a stiletto in his hand and Murder as his way of life. Sixteen dead men he had left in Sicily. Now he was to kill where it counted—as the infamous Executioner for Chicago's Scarface Al. Meet—*

# PAUL "THE WAITER" RICCA: THE QUIET KILLER

by DAVID MAZROFF

**P**AUL WAS probably the most efficient of all the killers Al Capone carried on his payrolls. Paul "The Waiter" Ricca killed quietly, alone, moving in the night like a slithering snake in the jungle, cold, impersonal, yet savage in the perfection of his own style of assassination. Paul "The Waiter" Ricca's method was the deadly stiletto thrust under the left armpit, through the rib cage and into the victim's heart.

He began his career in murder at an early age in Naples, Italy, where he was

born on November 14, 1897. Shortly after his seventeenth birthday, in 1915, he murdered a man in Naples as a paid executioner for a minor branch of the Sicilian Mafia.

He was caught, tried and convicted. Because of his youth, he was sentenced to a term of two years on a reduced charge of manslaughter. Upon his release from prison, he murdered the witness who had testified against him in the murder trial.

He fled to Sicily, where he was given aid and protection by the Mafia, who hid him in the

The AMAZING TRUE STORY of the Killer Chicago FEARED MOST!



mountainous section of Palermo. He was convicted in absentia for the second murder and sentenced to twenty-two years.

He returned to Naples when he received word that his family was involved in a feud with another family over a land dispute. In the next year he murdered fourteen members of the rival Torentino group: father, sons, uncles, and cousins. He again fled to Sicily. In 1920, he was put on a ship sailing for New York. He had in his possession forged passports and a thousand dollars in American money. His most important possession was a letter of introduction to Johnny Torrio, who had taken over Big Jim Colosimo's criminal empire of hoods, extortioners, and killers, along with the many houses of prostitution, bookie joints, and other enterprises. Torrio managed this by having Colosimo murdered.

The killers were Al Capone and Frankie Yale, who was brought in from New York especially for the caper. Torrio was a man without the slightest family loyalty. Big Jim was his uncle. Colosimo trusted Torrio, made him his righthand man and director of the bookie joints and whorehouses.

Torrio saw in Ricca a part of himself, a young man who was

slly, crafty, intelligent, and something else that he, himself, wasn't. Torrio would order killings but shrank from committing them. Ricca was the eager assassin. It wasn't that he was bloodthirsty. He simply had to keep proving to himself and others that he was an utter craftsman in the art of murder.

Physically, Ricca was average in height, five feet eight inches, slender, with dark brown hair and eyes, regular features. In later years he put on weight and suffered from diabetes and hypertension.

Torrio made him at ease in his suite in the Lexington Hotel, the gang's headquarters on Michigan Avenue and Twenty-second street. He said, "You're right name is Felice DeLucia, is that right?"

"Yes, *Signor*," Ricca answered politely.

"You speak no English at all?"

"None."

"No matter. You will pick it up. For the time being I will place you in a regular job in a small restaurant. You will be a waiter. The restaurant is frequented by many of our countrymen who speak both Italian and English. You will learn much of the language there. Is that satisfactory?"

"Whatever you say, *Signor*."

"Good. Now, you need a

place to live. I shall assign you a room in the hotel. I do not want you to move about too much until you have picked up some of the language and know your way around in the city. My lieutenant, Alphonse Capone, will take you in hand and show you around from time to time. Do you have clothes?"

"No, *Signor*, just a few pieces of underclothing."

"Do you have money?"

"I was given a thousand dollars in American money by friends in Sicily. I have it here."

Torrio waved a hand. "Good. Keep it." He dug into a pocket, removed a roll of bills, counted out three hundred dollars. "Take this. Alphonse will go with you to some stores where you can pick out suitable clothes. Get rid of that suit and shirt. It reeks of the old country, and is too conspicuous."

"Yes, *Signor*."

In the next year, Ricca had picked up enough of the language through listening, reading, attending the silent movies with one or another member of the gang who read the subtitles for him and explained their meaning. He was taken from the restaurant and put into one of the several breweries controlled by Torrio and Capone as a sort of foreman.

He was quick to learn. Capone liked him because Ricca was close-mouthed, seldom spoke unless spoken to, and then his answers were intelligent and to the point.

Capone told Torrio, "Ricca is smart. Let's move him up."

"Where do you want to put him?"

"In a bookie joint first. Let him learn how it's done, the whole operation. We need someone to oversee the whole string. He could be the man."

"Okay. You tell him. Take care of it."

Ricca again proved himself. He streamlined the operation of the handbook, caught several writers who wrote tickets for themselves after a race was run. He put two of them in hospitals. The third was found dead in an alley. He had been stabbed through the heart. The blade that killed him had been driven from under his left armpit straight to the heart. There were no more incidents of past-post ticket writing.

Ricca set up a central control office in a LaSalle office building. Each handbook had to call in the tickets written on each race two minutes before the race was run, when all bets on the race were stopped.

Torrio and Capone were having trouble with Dion

O'Bannion, boss of the North Side along with Bugs Moran. O'Bannion, a chauvinistic Irishman, referred to Torrio and Capone as "Those heathen pimps." It was an unfortunate slur that wasn't to go unanswered.

In 1924, O'Bannion, fighting for political power as a means to overthrow Torrio and Capone's hold on much of Chicago, ordered his hoods to sweep through the 42nd Ward and to see to it that voters did the right thing.

The 42nd Ward at the time was a plum for any politician. It was a Democratic stronghold. O'Bannion wanted to elect his man, a Republican. His gang rode through the district in black limousines. They abducted Democratic workers, beat them insensible, and ordered them to stay away or else. They scared others out of their wits. Under Hymie Weiss, O'Bannion's lieutenant, trucks of "ghosts"—unregistered voters—were driven from one voting station to another and voted for O'Bannion's candidate.

What was remarkable about the situation was the fact that Mayor Dever, a Democratic winner in the last election, did not see fit to interfere in any way. The Republican candidate won by a two to one majority. O'Bannion and Weiss were

elated. For O'Bannion it was a short-lived triumph.

Torrio called a meeting in his suite at the Lexington Hotel. Present were Capone, Frank Nitti, Jack McGurn, Albert Anselmi, Frank Scalisi, and Paul Ricca. It was a momentous meeting because it began a war to the death between the two gangs, Torrio and Capone on one side and O'Bannion and Weiss on the other.

Torrio said: "We've lost some ground. O'Bannion has put in all his own candidates in office. That gives him an edge. Something has to be done."

"That's easy," Capone said. "We get rid of O'Bannion."

"That'll still leave us with Hymie Weiss, Louie Alterie, and Schemer Drucci, not to speak of Bugs Moran and his mob. What about them? You can't knock all of them off. The heat would be too much."

"Let's take care of O'Bannion first," Capone said. "That'll be like pulling the tiger's teeth."

"You mean it'll be hard to do?"

"No, I mean it will take a hell of a lot of strength outta the mob," Capone replied.

"I can do it," Ricca said calmly. "O'Bannion doesn't know me. I will go into his flower shop and do the job. Quietly."



DINO O'BANNION



HYMIE WEISS

"No," Torrio said, "too dangerous for one man."

"Let me handle it, Johnny," Capone said.

"Okay, Al, you handle it."

Up to this writing, it has been believed that Scalisi, Anselmi, Angelo and Mike Genna, two of the five murderous Genna brothers, had been involved in the murder of O'Bannion. The closest investigation turned up the names of Scalisi, Anselmi, and Ricca as the killers, and Willie Heeney, a dope addict, as the driver of the car.

On this November 10, 1924, O'Bannion had an early break-

fast, kissed his wife good-by and drove to his flower shop on North State Street, across from the Holy Name Cathedral. It was a busy day for him. Mike Merlo, head of the Unione Siciliano, had died and orders for flowers had come in from every name hood, as well as from many public officials, ward committeemen, state senators and congressmen, judges, the mayor, and a host of high police officials.

Around noon, three men walked into the flower shop. They had called at nine that morning to say they would pick up the huge wreath they had



ordered. O'Bannion was clipping stems from a bunch of chrysanthemums on a table in the back room. Vincent Galvin, Victor Young, and Dave Loftus, employees, were at work around him. William Crutchfield, the Negro porter, was mopping the floor in the front shop.

The shop was no small operation. It did a business of several hundred thousand dollars yearly, the death rate of hoods in Chicago being what it was. The soberly tinted walls of the shop were half hidden by a jungle of palms, ferns, and blooming plants, and the air, warm and moist like that of a hothouse, was surcharged with the heavy odor of flowers.

At the rear, a glass show case with a frame of stained walnut extended from floor to ceiling and was filled with gorgeous masses of roses. At the side of the case, in a narrow passageway leading to the back room, a swing gate of wicker was propped open. Between this gate and the street entrance in an opposite corner, a long strip of blue rug stretched diagonally across the floor. Seen through the plate-glass windows at the front, State Street was thronged with laughing, whooping boys and girls out of a parochial school for their midday recess. Every

few minutes street cars went rumbling past. The massive gray structure of Holy Name Cathedral, where O'Bannion had been a choir boy, and attended church each Sunday, towered in the sunshine.

O'Bannion came to the front of the store and greeted the three men.

"Hello, boys," he said cheerily. "Have you come for the wreath? It's ready." He extended his hand.

The middle man of the trio smiled and took O'Bannion's hand and held it in a firm grip. The other two men drew pistols and fired as O'Bannion tried to jerk his hand free and reach for the gun under his coat.

The shots were fired at such close range the spurting flames burned O'Bannion's clothing. He was struck with five bullets in his body, one of the slugs piercing his heart. O'Bannion fell to the floor. His outflung arms had knocked over a crock of carnations. A tall lily, jarred by his fall, was still shaking, and some great white peonies crushed like snow under his head were beginning to be flecked and streaked with blood.

Ricca looked closely at the fallen man, aimed his pistol and crashed a final slug into O'Bannion's brain, the coup de grace. He had thought of the

stiletto he carried in a leather sheath inside his belt but thought better of it.

The three men walked out casually into the street and turned the corner into Superior Street, climbed into the waiting car at the curb. Heeney stepped on the accelerator, the engine roared and the car, heading west, soon passed out of view. A boy scout who was guiding traffic at the intersection of the streets, watched it disappear without interest. Sign painters working on a scaffold at the front of a store next door to the flower shop went on working, unaware that anything unusual had taken place.

O'Bannion's funeral was a thing of regal magnificence and it held the interest of the nation for its alarming display of the power and opulence gangland had achieved under prohibition. As it happened, Henry Cabot Lodge was buried in the East on the same day, and the statesman's funeral was insignificant in comparison with this gangster, hoodlum, and killer.

O'Bannion's casket cost \$10,000 and had been shipped in a special railway express car from Pennsylvania. The crowd that gathered in front of Sbarbaro's funeral shop blocked traffic for four square blocks. Roofs of neighboring business houses swarmed with onlook-

ers. Forty thousand people viewed the body. Fifty policemen were kept busy. Gangland declared an armistice, but in obedience to a police order rather than out of respect for the dead.

The funeral procession was more than a mile long. Three bands played dirges. It took twenty-five motor trucks and automobiles to carry the flowers. Ten thousand people followed the hearse. Ten thousand more, who had begun to gather early in the morning, waited at the grave.

Religious ceremony was the one thing lacking in all this pomp and circumstance. The Catholic Church disowned the dead hood. Cardinal Mundelein refused to permit funeral services in Holy Name Cathedral, and the church authorities barred the dead gangster from a grave in consecrated ground.

O'Bannion was thirty-two years old when he was slain, an old age for most of the hoods in Chicago.

Paul Ricca was the only Capone hood who came to Sbarbaro's to view the remains of the man he helped murder. He also followed the cortege to the cemetery.

Father Patrick Malloy of the Church of St. Thomas of Canterbury, who had known O'Bannion since childhood and

had cherished an affection for him all his life, stepped forward and performed last rites informally over his departed friend. The priest recited a litany in Latin, and the Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary in English, to which the multitude murmured responses, and that was all.

"One who refuses the ministrations of the Church in life need not expect them in death," explained a priest of the Catholic archdiocese. "O'Bannion was a notorious criminal. The Church did not recognize him in his days of lawlessness and when he died unrepentant in his iniquities he had no claim to last rites for the dead."

"O'Bannion," said Police Captain John Stege, "was a thief and murderer, but look at him now, buried eighty feet from a bishop."

John Stege spoke the truth. Hard by O'Bannion's grave stood the imposing granite mausoleum in which Bishop Porter, Archbishop Feehan, and Archbishop Quigley were interred.

Mrs. O'Bannion erected a tall shaft over her husband's resting place. But Cardinal Mundelein ordered it removed, and it was replaced by an unobtrusive headstone.

Viola Kaniff O'Bannion mourned her husband. If he had

been a thief, gunman, a safe-blower, and murderer, these crimes had never been brought home to her. To her he had been the perfect husband.

O'Bannion was everything Captain Stege said of him. He had been a heistman, burglar, safe-cracker, and killer before he reached his twentieth birthday. He did nine months in the Bridewell, the Chicago House of Correction, for burglary, and three months in the same jail for a murderous assault. He killed John Mahoney and Charles Reaser, members of his gang, because he believed they had crossed him.

He held up Torrio beer and bootleg liquor trucks, and those of Polack Joe Saltis, and the South Side and West Side O'Donnells, Irishmen like himself. He didn't recognize the code of ethics or honor among thieves. He killed John Duffy, another Irishman, who had come to Chicago from Philadelphia, because Duffy got on his nerves. He shot Davey Miller, a former pug and later the famous referee of the second Dempsey-Tunney fight still argued to this day as the "long count" battle which saved Tunney his title. There was no reason for this attack at all.

Through all his spectacular and turbulent career he was heading with unerring direct-

ness toward his bullet. His manner of death was inevitable. His grave was a logical achievement, and in it he found his first and last resting place and final peace.

PAUL RICCA should have taken a lesson from O'Bannion's life, but like all the others of the gangs around at the time he believed that violent death was for everyone else but him.

O'Bannion's murder struck the hour of vengeance. Hymie Weiss, Schemer Drucci, and Louis Alterie learned, through the grapevine, who the real killers were.

"Who the hell is this Ricca?" Weiss demanded.

"I checked him out," Drucci said. "He's a new-comer to the mob, a foreigner, can't even talk English. I'll get that bastard if it's the last thing I do."

"And the Gennas!" Weiss shouted. "I'll kill every one of them lousy Sicilians."

It was bold, ambitious talk, inflammatory, influenced by torn emotions. Weiss, a Pole, loved O'Bannion. No brothers could have been closer. O'Bannion was his only family. He took O'Bannion's death hard. All the pent-up hatreds and bitter animosities between both sides were turned loose. The pattern now was to kill, no



JOHNNY TORRIO

matter how, when, or where. A man saluted another with a smile and shot him dead. The touching of wineglass in comradely fashion was the signal for a bullet through the heart. Men were killed as they stood on their front-door stoops. They fell dead on their way to work with their wives' good-by kisses on their lips. They were found lifeless in alleys and roadside ditches.

Chicago became Sicily. The Sicilian code, with its treacheries, assassinations and ambushed death, governed the feud. Over a hundred men were killed in the next three months, most of them underlings. Ricca

moved through the night like an avenging ghost, his stiletto working overtime. How many men he actually killed is unknown but the figure was close to twenty.

The feud continued unabated for the next five years. Johnny Torrio was seriously wounded by Bugs Moran and Hymie Weiss as he stepped from his auto with an armful of groceries. He turned over all his holdings to Capone and fled the city. Three of the Genna brothers were killed. Henry Spingola, brother-in-law of the Gennas, Samoots Amatuna, the two Morici brothers, Nerone the Cavalier, Tropea the Scourge, and Baldelli the Eagle were gunned down by savage bursts from machine-guns and shot-guns. All these were Capone's men.

Capone called a meeting. In the Council now was Paul Ricca, who had managed to make himself known not only to Weiss but to the police department as well. He was picked up several times by detectives from the rackets bureau and the homicide division. File Number D-78267, Chicago Police Department, shows that Ricca was indicted for conspiracy to murder, case nol-prossed, income tax evasion, extortion, postal fraud, all nol-prossed. Thirteen arrests

when he was questioned about the murders of Weiss henchmen.

Attending the meeting, besides Ricca, were Jack McGurn, Frank Nitti, the Fischettis, cousins of Capone, Albert Anselmi, Frank Scalisi, and Willie Heeney. These men, in the main, represented the Executioner Squad.

Capone said, "We've got to stop Weiss, Drucci, Alterie, Bugs Moran, and the Gusenberg brothers. That will end this war. The people downtown are pressuring me to stop the killings. It's that or we'll have to go out of business."

"Have you tried to talk to Weiss?" Charlie Fischetti asked. "Is it possible he'll go for a peace treaty?"

"Yeah, if we give him Anselmi, Scalisi, Ricca, and Heeney. Those are his terms." Capone smashed his cigar into an ashtray. "I told him I wouldn't do that to a dog."

"What was his answer?" Ricca asked.

"He said, 'I'll get them anyway.' I told him we'd get him first. He laughed and hung up."

"Let's get him," Ricca said.

"It won't be easy," Capone replied. "He's cunning as a fox, has two or three bodyguards with him at all times. What we'll do, have to do, as I see it,

is to break up his mob. If we can corner Weiss someway, that will be the frosting on the cake.

"What about Drucci and Alterie?" McGurn asked.

"Get 'em!" Capone snapped.

"Bugs Moran and the Gusenbergs?" Charlie Fischetti asked.

"We'll get them too. You guys keep your eyes open at all times. What we're doing here now is what Weiss is doing too. He wants all of you. Don't move around alone, if at all possible."

"I like to work alone, Al," Ricca said.

"You do that, but be damned careful."

"I always am."

In the next two years five hundred men were killed. Chicago was afire with this savage blood bath. Jimmy Doherty, Red Duffy, and, because he happened to be in the same car at the time, Assistant State's Attorney William McSwiggin, were killed by Capone gunmen. Weiss and Drucci killed Vito Bascone. Some of the big boys were being hit. Next was Felipe Gnolfo, who had been questioned in the O'Bannion murder.

Weiss, Drucci, and Bugs Moran sighted Capone's car at State and Fifty-fifth streets. Sylvester Barton, the chauffeur,

was behind the wheel. In the back seat were Charlie Fischetti and Percy Haller. The car in which Weiss, Drucci, and Moran were riding moved alongside Capone's auto. Machine-guns poked through open windows. Fischetti and Haller dropped to the floor of the car. Barton was wounded. Fischetti was a madman. He raved to Capone.

"We've got to get those crazy bastards once and for all! They could've killed me!"

"We'll get 'em," Capone answered quietly. There was determination in his tone. "Every damned one of them."

Capone called in Ricca. "Paul, I want you to move into Weiss' territory. Use some kinda disguise. Sharpen up your blade and put it to work. Weiss, Drucci, and Moran, if possible. If not, any of their men, as many as you can find."

"Sure, Al. I'll get on it tonight."

Ricca caught up with half a dozen of Weiss' men. He moved like a cat, positioned his man, then thrust his stiletto into the victim's heart.

A short time later, Ricca, Jack McGurn, Frank Nitti and Willie Heeney were riding in an auto when they caught sight of Weiss and Drucci walking on Michigan Boulevard in front of the Standard Oil Building. All four leaped from the car and

ran across the street, shooting as they neared Weiss and Drucci, who took cover behind two automobiles and in a lull in the shooting dashed into the Standard Oil Building. The attacking quartette scampered back to their car and drove off.

Weiss and Drucci countered by killing Tony Curingione, alias Tony (and Tommy) Ross. The body was discovered weighted with stones and bricks in a cistern on an abandoned farm in the Forest Preserve near Palos Park. Three bullet holes were in his head. His hands and feet were trussed with wire. Marks on his face and arms indicated he had been burned with matches and cigar butts.

"They call me heartless, eh?" Capone said. "Ross was innocent. He was just my chauffeur. He had a family, and knew nothing of my business. That's the kind of guys Weiss, Drucci and Moran are."

"What are you going to do about it?" the reporter asked.

"Capone is a religious man," Al replied, his eyes cold. "I'm gonna pray for their rotten souls!"

The end of the feud was nearing, in dramatic fashion. Weiss called Capone.

"You want peace, Al?" Weiss said.

"That's up to you."

"Give me Anselmi, Scalisi,

and Ricca, especially Ricca. Look, we know all about Ricca and his stiletto. You give me those three and we'll forget about McGurn, Heeney, and Nitti."

"Weiss, you've gone completely nuts. Let me put it this way. You give me the guys who got Tommy Ross and who wounded Barton when they shot up my car."

"I don't know what you're talking about, Al. That wasn't us."

"Sure, I know. Gremlins. Weiss, I've put up your number. I'm going to have you slaughtered, like the pig you are. Got it?"

"Keep your eyes open, Al. You're next!"

Al Capone was true to his word. First, however, Anselmi and Scalisi were murdered. Alterie was chased out of town. Drucci was shot to death. Two for two. All big boys.

Weiss' headquarters were in an office at 738 North State Street, over the flower shop where O'Bannion had been murdered. Next door at 740 North State, was a three-story rooming house. There was another rooming house at No. 1 Superior Street, about fifty feet west of State Street. The two rooms at 740 State and No. 1 Superior, commanded the approaches to the flower shop and



to Weiss' office above it. Rooms were rented on upper floors at both places. Machine gun nests were set up, and the vigil began. Hymie Weiss had been sentenced to be executed by a court from which there was no appeal.

In the Superior Street room were Jack McGurn and Frank Nitti. In the State Street room were Paul Ricca and Willie Heeney. Days went by. The killers waited patiently. On the fourth day, October 11, 1926, Weiss' car drew up to the north curb of Superior Street at the side of the Holy Name Cathedral. It was four o'clock in the afternoon. Five men stepped out on the sidewalk to go to Weiss' office. They were Weiss, Pat Murray, his bodyguard, Sam Peller, his driver, W. W. O'Brien, an attorney, and Ben Jacobs, an investigator in O'Brien's employ.

O'Brien sauntered to the State Street curb first. Peller lingered to lock the door of the car. The other three walked leisurely in a straggling group.

The machine guns roared and spat out their deadly slugs. The drowsy stillness of the street was shattered by the throbbing and ear-splitting clatter. Bullets, sizzling through the air with the noise of wind-driven hail, splintered stone fragments from the corner of



AL CAPONE

the cathedral and cut slits in the smooth cement slabs of the sidewalk.

Weiss shook violently as the bullet struck him. He was hit by a dozen of the heavy caliber machine gun bullets. He stumbled forward and sprawled on his face. He was dead before he hit the ground. Pat Murray, riddled by fifteen slugs, tumbled lifeless beside Weiss. W. W. O'Brien was struck in the arm, side, and abdomen, and collapsed in his tracks. Peller was shot in the groin. Jacobs was hit in the leg. Both men darted south across Superior Street out of range of the guns and fell in the entrance of a building a block away.

The killers ran down the back stairs of the rooming houses and made their way into an alley. They crossed Superior Street without being noticed,

hurried south through the alley, turned west in a side alley and vanished in Dearborn Street. Their machine guns were found on top of a dog house at the rear of No. 12 West Huron Street, where they had tossed them. It was the only clue to their flight.

It was Paul Ricca whose unerring aim had cut down Weiss. He reported to Capone, a little pridefully in the way he had done the job. "You wanted Weiss slaughtered like a pig, Al? That's the way he got it. I all but cut him in half."

Capone nodded. "That's the way I wanted it, Paul. Let's see if we'll get a little peace from here on in."

There was to be no peace, however. Bugs Moran took over as boss of the remnants of the mob. He hated Capone, the Fischettis, McGurn, and Ricca as much as did Weiss. More than anything else, he wanted Capone, McGurn, and Ricca killed.

Frank and Pete Gusenberg caught up with McGurn in a smoke shop on Rush Street while McGurn was making a telephone call. They riddled the phone booth with machine gun slugs. McGurn was rushed to a hospital. He pulled through. All through the days of his convalescence he raved about killing the Gusengbers and

every man in the Moran gang. Capone and Ricca visited him daily. Ricca now was third in command behind Nitti. He told McGurn that Moran would be taken care of at the right time.

The right time came on February 14, 1929, in what is known today as the St. Valentine's Day Massacre in which seven of Moran's hoods were machine-gunned to death.

The St. Valentine's Day Massacre turned the heat on all the mobs in Chicago. The government stepped in. First, they went after Capone. They succeeded in getting enough evidence against him to put him away for ten years on income tax evasion charges. That put Nitti in as top man with Ricca as his first lieutenant.

Ricca's climb to the top was just a little less than spectacular considering the fact that there were such men as Jack McGurn, Sam Hunt, Tony Accordo, James "The Monk" Allegetti, who was also born in Naples and was a valuable man in the Syndicate, a fixer, bagman for bookmaking collections, controlled several unions, and was the vicelord on the Near North Side, among others, including Sam "Teets" Battaglia, a native born Chicagoan.

A Sicilian, Teets Battaglia's record goes back to 1924, and listed more than twenty-five

arrests for burglary, robbery, larceny, and as a prime suspect in at least seven murders. He controlled all gambling and policy on the West and North Sides, and was heavily involved in the narcotics traffic. He was convicted four times for attempted burglary, assault with intent to kill, attempted murder, and interstate extortion. A shrewd, highly intelligent organizer, he was hard as nails.

Ricca rose over all these and Sam Giancana, another native born Chicagoan with a record of more than seventy arrests for every crime in the book. He was a prime suspect in three murders before he was twenty, was indicted on one when he was eighteen, released on bail. The charge was stricken after all the key witnesses were murdered.

WITH CAPONE in prison, Nitti and Ricca began to expand the operations of the Syndicate, first into the unions. Nitti and Ricca's first move was against Local 278 of the Chicago Bartenders and Beverage Dispensers Union in 1935, which was headed by George B. McLane.

McLane was summoned to the LaSalle Hotel for a meeting with Ricca.

"What about?" McLane asked.

"Just be there, George," Ricca said. "Promptly at two o'clock."

Ricca brought along Nitti. The two went to work on McLane. Ricca said, "We want you to put in one of our men as an officer."

"Impossible," McLane argued.

"George, nothing is impossible. A little difficult maybe, but not impossible."

"Listen, you donkey," Nitti said, "we've taken over other unions. We made George Browne, president of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Motion Picture Operators, and Mike Carrozzo the boss of the Chicago Street Cleaning Union, and George Scalise president of the Building Service Employees International Union. Got it? We want in on your union."

"I'll have to talk to some people first," McLane answered.

"You do that little thing," Ricca said. "Three days. I'll call you then."

Ricca called McLane three days later and told him to come to the Capri Restaurant on North Clark Street at two o'clock. Ricca brought along Joe Fusco, Louis "Little New York" Campagna, Jake Guzik, and Freddie Evans.

Ricca came right to the

point. "When does our man go in?"

"I can't do a thing about that until I confer with the executive board. I have to have their approval."

"Are they objecting?" Ricca asked.

"Yes, they are."

"Give me the names of those who are opposed to putting our man in. I'll handle it from there on."

"I can't do that."

"Listen, George, cut the crap," Ricca said. "You'll do as I say or you're going to wind up in an alley deader than a brass monkey."

McLane was obviously shaken at this threat. He knew it was no idle statement. He said, "I'll bring it up at a special meeting next week. I'll have an answer for you then."

"Okay," Ricca replied. "One week."

In the next week, Ricca ordered an attack on the business agents and officers of the union. He sent pickets around to every saloon in the city to parade up and down with signs reading "Unfair to Organized Labor." Business fell off as Syndicate hoods beat up anyone who tried to go into one of the saloons or restaurants where pickets paraded.

Ricca called McLane. "One more day, George, and I'm

going to send in a couple of men and have them shoot your heart out!"

That threat, if McLane could have proved it, was enough to put Ricca behind bars for several years. However, even if McLane was willing to accuse Ricca of threatening his life, he was aware that repercussions would be swift and fatal. He stalled for time.

"Look, Mr. Ricca," McLane said, "a day may not be enough. I haven't met with all the members of the executive board."

"To hell with the executive board! You lay it on the line to them. We'll stop beating up your business agents and remove the pickets. That way business will return to normal and there'll be peace between you and the saloons and restaurants. This is your last chance, McLane. No more stalling!"

McLane knew he was up against a wall. There was no way out. He agreed to put in Ricca's man as an officer of the union. That man was Louis Romano.

Romano was regarded by the underworld and the police department as a psychopathic killer. He shot three men in a saloon, one of them fatally, after a trivial argument. He was indicted for murder and assault



with intent to kill. All three indictments were eventually dropped because there were no witnesses and the two men who had been wounded refused to identify Romano as the man who had shot them. Ten years later, Romano killed Albert Lucenti during an argument over a minor traffic accident. Refusal of witnesses to testify again forced the district attorney's office to once more drop the charges.

Romano became the voice of Local 278, and in due time was elected president. Once again the Syndicate was successful in

taking over a union, lock, stock, and barrel.

McLane was summoned before the grand jury in 1940 and ordered to tell what he knew about the takeover of Local 278 by the Syndicate. He had to testify to the truth or go to jail. The result of his testimony was a four-count indictment against Frank Nitti, Paul Ricca, Louis "Little New York" Campagna, Louis Romano, and a few lesser lights. The charge was conspiracy to remove, steal, or loot the treasury of Local 278 under threats to maim or kill McLane and other members

of the Union opposing the Syndicate. That was Paul Ricca's way.

Before the case came to trial, Ricca had several confidential talks with McLane. Other Syndicate hoods held meetings with union members who indicated a willingness to testify. At the trial, McLane took the Fifth Amendment, as did the rest of the witnesses. The local then was thrown into receivership. Several months later, the receivership was dissolved and elections ordered in the courtroom of Judge Robert Dunne. James Crowley, who also had been named in the indictment, and who held the office of secretary-treasurer, was elected president.

Crowley's first act was to rehire every official that was fired during the receivership and who were suspected of being under the rule of the Syndicate. He was a good boy for a while and then decided to take over the local, sans Syndicate control. In 1947, four hoods nailed him in his shiny Cadillac and opened up with two shotguns. His wife, who was riding with him, was instantly killed. She was hit by twenty-five slugs, her face and body torn to ribbons. Crowley was seriously injured but recovered. He was a good boy again until he was finally ousted

from office. That was Paul Ricca's way. Another of Ricca's unions—the phrase is used advisedly—was Local 110 of the Motion Picture Operators Union. Ricca controlled Local 110 for some thirty years. Tommy Maloy had been Ricca's front man in the union. Maloy was a tough nut whose record went back to the early days of Prohibition when he was chauffeur and bodyguard for Mossy Enright, boss of the building-trades unions. Enright was also tough but not tough enough. When he ran afoul of the Syndicate he was shot to death. Maloy then took a job as a projectionist in a movie house.

Shortly after he took the job, two organizers for a new union called on him and threatened him with their guns. Either he joined the new union or else. Maloy beat both hoods senseless, took their guns, and threw them down a long flight of stairs. The incident made Maloy business agent of Local 110. Other acts of muscle eventually gave him full control of the union.

No sooner had he gained control than Maloy began shaking down theater owners by threatening strikes. Objectors to this form of extortion were gunned down. Two of Maloy's gunmen were Ralph

O'Hara, who became a kingpin in the Syndicate's wire service, and Joey Montana, a gunman and cop-killer.

A theater operator named Jacob Kaufman was rash enough to back a rival candidate for Maloy's job and was promptly murdered. Freddy Oser, another rebel, tried the same thing. He was asked to come to Maloy's office for a conference. He foolishly came and Maloy shot him dead. Maloy pleaded self-defense and the judge ordered the jury to acquit him on the grounds that no one had actually witnessed the shooting.

Maloy was then indicted on income tax evasion charges. A small oversight on his part amounting to \$350,000.

Ricca was annoyed. He ordered two hoods to straighten out Maloy. A week later, the two hoods thrust a machine-gun into Maloy's car and cut him in half.

George Browne, International President of I.A.T.S.E., took a tip from Ricca and appointed Nick Circella, alias Nick Dean, to succeed Maloy. Now began a series of events which brought disaster to many members of the Syndicate, the big boys, all of it leading back to the appointment of Nick Circella.

Browne's partner was a fat

pimp named Willie Bioff. Bioff had the idea that it would be a good thing for movie theater owners to contribute to a fund to be used in setting up soup kitchens during the Depression of the Thirties. Accordingly, Bioff and Browne went to the offices of Balaban and Katz, owners and operators of most of the Loop's plush theaters, including the State-Lake, Chicago, and a dozen others. Browne and Bioff talked of the great humanistic deed Barney Balaban would be performing by his contribution. The demand, for that's what it was, started at twenty thousand dollars and finally dropped to five thousand dollars after several hints as to how much it would cost Balaban and Katz theaters if there was a sudden strike of the motion picture operators.

Browne and Bioff then talked to all the other theater owners along the same line. They paid off. It didn't stop at the first payoff. It kept on, time and time again. It was inevitable that the Syndicate would hear of it. Ricca called in Browne and Bioff.

"What the hell do you guys think you're doing, anyway?" Ricca demanded. "You're working a shakedown on your own. Who the hell gave you permission to do that?"

"We've set up soup kitchens



for the hungry," Bioff said. "We're feeding about ten thousand people a day."

"Sure you are. And where is the meat, bread, vegetables coming from? Don't tell me, I'll tell you! From the markets. You've been using my name, saying I'm behind it. Everything you've been getting was free and the money from the theater owners you two bastards stuck in your pocket. How much?"

Browne said, "Roughly about thirty grand."

"That's pretty rough. Let's make it sixty grand, right?"

"I don't know," Browne said.

"I know," Ricca said. "You guys owe me thirty grand, my half of the take. Get it to me tomorrow. Now, you guys have been playing for peanuts. If you can do this thing here you can do it in Hollywood. I'm going to send you guys there, along with Nick Circella to kinda guide you. You're the head of the International Union. You can call the shots, Browne, eh? We understand each other?"

"Sure, Mr. Ricca. When do we leave?"

"In about a week."

Browne, Bioff, and Circella left for Hollywood. Circella held a meeting with Bugsy Siegel, who was firmly entrenched in the circle of movie stars, directors, producers, and

studio heads. He counseled Circella on certain phases of action.

"Just count me in for a piece of the action," Siegel said. "I'm sure Nitti and Ricca won't object, considering the help I'm giving you boys. I want my end to come from you, not Browne or Bioff. I don't know those guys and don't want to know them. Okay?"

"Sure, Ben. I'll call Ricca and get the okay."

IN THE NEXT three years Browne, Bioff, and Circella shook down the studios for millions, the major portion of the money going to the Syndicate in Chicago. The trio went to New York, where they pulled the same stunts. Pay off or face a strike that will close all the movie theaters in the city.

The fall had to come. It did when the entire extortion plot blew wide open. Browne and Bioff were indicted on charges of extortion and named seven of the Syndicate's top gangsters as confederates, among them Nick Circella, Frank Nitti, Paul Ricca, Louis "Little New York" Campagna, and three others. All seven were indicted and convicted in a New York City federal court and sentenced to long terms. Frank Nitti committed suicide rather than face

prison. That left Ricca as top man of the Syndicate despite the fact that he was in a prison cell in Leavenworth.

From the very first day of his imprisonment, Ricca had the aid and comfort of Tony Accardo and Murray "The Camel" Humphries, who visited him frequently, posing as attorneys, and worked to effect his release.

They were successful after three years. Not only was Ricca released but the other six as well, and the machinations involved in the early release of the seven caused a political scandal all the way from St. Louis to Washington, D.C. Attempts were made to send all seven back to prison but there was too much political pressure from powerful sources and the seven remained free.

George Browne and Willie Bioff were released long before the seven Syndicate hoods. Browne moved to Phoenix, Arizona, and made a new start in life, separating himself from all union activities and gang affiliations. Some time after the seven were released, Browne came out of his ranch-style home in Phoenix, got into his pickup truck, turned on the ignition and turned off his life. The dynamite explosion shattered windows for blocks. It blew the truck apart and tore

George Browne's body literally to shreds.

Willie Bioff? The fat little pimp simply vanished from the face of the earth. He hasn't been seen anywhere to this day. It is believed he was slain and his body dismembered and buried in a lime pit. Paul Ricca was not one to stand for the kind of double-cross Browne and Bioff committed.

Local 110, the Motion Pictures Operators Union, according to Assistant U.S. Attorney David P. Schippers, head of the Justice Department's organized crime unit in Chicago, declared in 1965 that the union served as "a hiring hall" for relatives of the top hoods. "Most of these relatives have never seen a projector, let alone report for work."

Among the relatives carrying membership cards in the union were Paul Ricca's brother-in-law, Pat Gigante, Tony Accardo's son, Tony, Jr., Murray Humphries' brother, Jack Wright; Frank Nitti's nephew, Frank Dolendi, and a score of others.

The Syndicate does not tolerate disobedience or attempts by its members or outsiders to impair or destroy any part of its operational setup. Browne and Bioff were a case in point. There were others, of course. Then there

was the case of Herman Posner, seventy years old, a projectionist who decided to lead a movement in opposition to the Syndicate in an effort to break its hold on the union.

Several days before he was to turn over evidence to federal investigators in 1960 involving kickbacks and shakedowns, extortions, and beatings, he was killed by a knife thrust through his heart. The briefcase he was carrying which contained the alleged evidence against the Syndicate disappeared. It was never found. His killer or killers are unknown. The manner in which he was killed pointed to only one man. Paul "The Waiter" Ricca.

Ricca never stopped being Ricca, the silent, impassive killer, even with advancing years at a time when most of the top hoods of the Syndicate had been put out to pasture. That 'pasture' usually was a luxurious home in River Forest, a suburb of Chicago, where plush residences were occupied by Jake "Greasy Thumb" Guzik, Murray "The Camel" Humphries, Tony Accardo, and, of course, Paul "The Waiter" Ricca.

The government was not through with Ricca, however. His release after three years of a ten-year sentence in the movie shakedown which led to a

Congressional investigation stuck in the craw of that large group of honest federal officers. The IRS began looking intensively into Ricca's tax returns.

Ricca's mode of living, the expense in maintaining the kind of home he occupied, his investments and interests in many legitimate enterprises did not square with his declared income. After a diligent and exhaustive investigation by the IRS, Ricca was indicted for the offense of income tax evasion, brought to trial, convicted, and sentenced to a term of nine years and fined \$15,000.

Once again the Syndicate went to work to relieve Ricca of the burden of his prison sentence. The powerful legal forces employed by the Syndicate were turned loose. Money was no object. Ricca wasn't sweating it out in the United States Penitentiary at Terre Haute, Indiana. He knew how to do time, something he had learned from his days in Sicily when he was in hiding from the Italian gendarmerie for that series of fourteen murders, and during his stay in Leavenworth. Besides, he had a comfortable cell with a desk, reading lamp, the daily newspapers, magazines, and visitors. He was visited often by Humphries, Accardo, and by Roland V. Libonati, the Congressman

from the 7th District of Chicago, who was on the House Judiciary Committee.

Congressman Libonati visited the U.S. Penitentiary at Terre Haute, a visit that was approved by the U.S. Bureau of Prisons in Washington, D.C. Libonati's visit to the penitentiary was, it was later declared, a followup to an article he had written which had been inserted in the Congressional Record and appeared in the Friday issue, September 2, 1960. All well and good.

However, while he was at the prison, Congressman Libonati requested permission to visit with Ricca and Frank Keenan who also was serving a sentence for income tax evasion. Was Ricca a constituent of Congressman Libonati? Hardly. River Forest is not a part of the 7th District of Chicago. Did, then, Congress Libonati represent Ricca in a legal manner? Not that either. They were friends.

There is nothing wrong in a congressman's visit to a friend who had run afoul of the IRS. Income tax evasion has struck down many important men, legitimate businessmen as well as many brothers of the blunderworld. Should a friend be deserted merely because of such a trivial matter as failing to report honestly one's earnings?



BIG JIM COLISIMO

What are friends for if not to stand by when trouble comes? Besides, at all times when Congressman Libonati was talking with Ricci an employee of the Bureau of Prisons was present.

Congressman Libonati's first meeting with Ricca was very warm. He hugged and kissed Ricca, gestures of respect, rituals practiced in Sicily and in this country when a mafioso greets a Don or Elder either to ask for a favor or to bestow one that will aid the Don.

Murray Humphries then visited Ricca in the Terre Haute prison. Permission for him to visit Ricca was obtained through Congressman Libonati. Humphries reported back to the Syndicate in Chicago that Ricca was "very pleased with his visit

with Congressman Libonati." Humphries thereafter spoke frequently with the Congressmen, over the telephone and in personal contact.

All these meetings proved fruitful. The United States Court of Appeals reduced Ricca's sentence to three years and reduced also the fine of \$15,000 to \$5,000. The Court also acquitted Ricca of a charge of conspiracy. He was released on October 1, 1961, after serving twenty-seven months.

Ricca returned to Chicago and picked up where he left off, still a Don, the *Capo di Capo*, the chief architect, along with "Tough Tony" Accardo, Murray Humphries, and Sam "Momo" Giancana of the modern Chicago Syndicate. It did not refer itself as the Cosa Nostra or the Mafia. Those titles were left to bandy about by the likes of Joseph Valachi and New York City and Brooklyn hoods. The Chicago branch wanted no association with the names. They preferred *The Syndicate*, *The Organization*, or *The Outfit*.

By any comparison, the Syndicate was the most efficient, thoroughly organized, greater controlled through every chain of command of all the gangs in the country. They punished all offenders swiftly and rewarded loyalty just as fast. It

has been like that since Frank Nitti did the *Dutch Act* or the same provocative question, *Was he taken for a ride?*

The IRS having finished with Ricca, and failed to put away for a long stretch, the Immigration Department now stepped in. If no other city, state, or federal authority could break his hold on the National Criminal Combine, and it went without saying that the Chicago branch controlled the nation's criminal empire, then they, the Immigration Service would end it by deportation proceedings.

The Immigration Department made a case against Ricca, brought him to trial for falsifying his application papers for citizenship. He was subsequently denaturalized and fined \$500 for contempt of court and ordered deported. He was freed on \$20,000 bail pending an appeal. The case dragged through the courts with one postponement after another.

THE KEFAUVER Committee subpoenaed him in an effort to learn of his influence over the many criminal gangs operating in the United States, and especially of how he managed to escape imprisonment on the sentences originally meted out by the courts. He took the Fifth Amendment. The Fifth Amendment to the Constitu-

tion is a safeguard against tyranny or an invasion of personal rights. It reads, for those who are uninformed of its wording:

"No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger/ nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; *nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself*, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation."

The italicized phrase has been the weapon used by the underworld, on the instructions of their army of lawyers, to avoid incriminating themselves when summoned before an investigating body. The list of Mafia or Syndicate gangsters who have used it is too long for mention but it is enough to say that they have used it more than all the legitimate men and women ever summoned before an investigating committee since it was written into law. It belongs in the Bill of Rights. The fact that it has been used

to the advantage of the criminal element is a moot point.

The influence of the Syndicate, especially in the hands of men like Ricca and Murray Humphries, is no better illustrated than in the case of Congressman Libonati.

After Ricca was released he learned that the FBI was keeping him under surveillance, as well as other members of the Syndicate. Ricca ordered Humphries to do something about it. Humphries, a college educated hoodlum, extremely intelligent, sought out Congressman Ronald V. Libonati.

Humphries went to Washington. There, on February 17, 1961, he met with Congressman Thomas J. O'Brien in the Hamilton Hotel. The two men sat in a corner of the lobby and conversed in low tones. After an hour of conversation, Humphries left the hotel and was followed by FBI agents to the home of Libonati at 224 C. Street N.E.

Shortly after, Congressman Libonati held meetings with the Department of Naturalization and Immigration and tried to influence the department to sanction a bill that would provide that any alien who had a son who had served in the Armed Forces of the United States that the parent or parents would not be subject to

deportation. The Department of Naturalization and Immigration refused.

In 1963, Congressman Libonati resigned "because of the poor health of my wife and my desire to return to private law practice."

Having this one failure was sufficient reason for the Syndicate to harbor the belief that Libonati had outlived his usefulness. A new man was called for. That man turned out to be Frank Annunzio. He, too, turned out to be a lame duck.

Ricca and his board of directors, Tony Accardo, Sam Giancana, Murray Humphries Joseph J. Aiuppa, and Marshall Caifano went into a huddle. Aiuppa was the owner and operator of a score of taverns and strip-joints in Cicero, controlled Cicero, all of the gambling and vice, chartered Local 450, Bartenders, Waiters, Waitress and Miscellaneous Workers Union in 1935, still controls it, and began as a muscleman for Al Capone.

Marshall Caifano has a record of forty or more arrests for vagrancy, burglary, extortion, conspiracy, and murder. He was the prime suspect in more than a dozen killings. He owned and operated taverns and night-clubs, auto agencies, restaurants, apartment houses, construction and engineering firms,

aluminum and steel products, and meat and produce plants. There was enough business brains and know-how in this group to operate a billion dollar industry involving every kind of business and service required by consumers.

They decided to go to William J. "Botchie" Connors, who was boss of the 42nd Ward, Democratic ward committeeman, state senator, and chief deputy bailiff of the Municipal court. Botchie Connors was a king. The *Chicago Daily News* proclaimed that in a feature story which declared:

"Chicago's 42nd ward is ruled by a king. A politician wears the diadem in that domain. His name is William J. Connors."

Connors had on his staff an ex-bootlegger named George Kries, right name Creff, who once managed the C. & O. Restaurant at 509 North Clark Street. It was a hangout for such notable cutthroats as Bug Moran, Hymie Weiss, the Gusenberg brothers, and sundry other *peace-loving citizens*.

The C. & O. Restaurant was a happy hunting ground for killers, who committed three murders there in the short space of two years before police took a good look at it and decided to mark it *persona non grata*. It didn't stay closed long because



King Connors had it reopened. Kries or Creff acted as Connors' prime minister, the man who kept everyone in line, and that included cops, judges, district attorneys, politicians, and hoods. A former convict, Eddie Sturch, handled all the payoffs to Connors and acted as his bodyguard. Why a state senator needed a bodyguard is one of the unsolved mysteries of that era of Chicago's wild history of criminal syndicalism and all that it entailed.

Walt Rogers was Connors' Man Friday and a prize package if ever there was one. Rogers' specialty was whore houses. He was charged once with murder and assault with intent to kill. Nothing came of it.

Connors' brother John, who was known as the *Duke of Keno*, was the gambling boss of the ward and the owner of the C. & O. Restaurant! It is easy to understand why the cops couldn't keep the C. & O. closed, even after three killings there.

Connors was once indicted on charges of conspiracy in connection with a five million dollar swindle involving the Sanitary District. He refused to testify on the grounds of self-incrimination! He was cleared of all charges in due time. He was involved in many other choice bits of scandal. Connors'

boyhood friend was Dorsey Crowe, the ward's alderman from 1919 until 1962, when he passed peacefully beyond the realm of the living. They were regarded as the modern Damon and Pythias and shared everything equally—ambition, wealth, and ideology.

Connors was willing to listen to any offer Ricca and the council made. Would he give protection? Of course. He could and did, in the city and state, but he could not reach any federal authority, judge, district attorney, FBI agents, the IRS, or the Naturalization and Immigration Service. It didn't matter. He died in 1961 before he could do anything for Ricca. Crowe died a year later, and Ricca once again had to look elsewhere for protection. That wasn't too difficult in Chicago, where an extended hand didn't mean a handshake but a payoff.

Connors and Crowe's successor was a buffoon named Paddy Bauler, who might have been a first cousin to Bathhouse John Coughlin, the slayer of the King's English and Alderman of the First Ward in the heyday of Big Jim Colosimo, Johnny Torrio, and Al Capone.

Paddy Bauler was known as the Clown Prince of the City Council. Like Coughlin, he had power and entry into city hall, judge's chambers, and district

attorneys' offices. He kept Ricca "clean" in Chicago. The feds tried hard constantly to nail Ricca but Ricca's lawyers and accountants saw to it that he didn't make any more mistakes that would land him again in the hands of federal authorities.

Ricca finally tired of it all and retired from all active participation in the Syndicate, although he remained, along with Tony Accardo, as a top member of the Board. The years had taken their toll of Ricca. He was suffering from diabetes, hypertension, and had a mild stroke and a mild heart attack. He was, he told himself and anyone who would listen, a weary old man.

He suffered another heart attack on September 14, 1972, and was admitted to Presbyterian St. Luke's Hospital. He lingered for a month and died peacefully on October 11, glad, no doubt, to be out of the violent life he had led for fifty years. He was 74 when he passed away.

His body was taken to the Galewood Funeral Chapel for

burial. His widow allowed him to "lie in state" with a \$10,000 sapphire ring on his pinkie finger and a pair of matching cuff links on his shirt. The ring and cuff links were lifted.

An investigation turned up the fact that a mysterious couple knocked on the door of the chapel late on the night before the funeral, and after all the mourners had departed. The couple pleaded for admission, explaining they had been delayed by traffic and—"simply must pay our last respects to a dear friend." The lone attendant allowed them to remain a few minutes. When he looked at the body after the couple left, the attendant discovered that the ring and cuff links were gone!

What the law and rival mobsters could not accomplish, a couple of petty albeit daring thieves did. They robbed Ricca. The attendant said he thought he saw the body move when he examined it after the couple left. It's possible. A guy like Ricca, even in death, would fight against being taken.

Ironic, isn't it?

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# The Hard Part

by  
**ROBERT  
EDWARD  
ECKELS**

*It was easy. All I had to do was  
be a dead man for an hour—  
and get free before the grave.*

---

I WANT TO make one thing perfectly clear right from the start. I didn't go to Slingerland's house that night with the intention of killing him.

I was angry, it's true, and I intended to have it out with him once and for all. But murder—no. If I had been planning that, I can assure you I would have made a much better job of it, because I'm a very careful and methodical man. Ask anyone who knows me.

That was one of the problems between Myra, my wife, and me. She isn't a careful person at all. One time she sent one of my suits to the cleaner's without removing the five dollar bill I always keep pinned in the sleeve—just in case, you know.

When the suit came back minus the money she tried to claim it was my fault. But, of course, it wasn't.

But in any case, I did go out to Slingerland's that night and lean on the bell until he finally answered.

"For God's sakes," he said when he recognized me. "What are you doing here, Oren?"

"You know," I said bitterly. "You know."

Slingerland sighed heavily. "Yes," he said, "I suppose I do." He held the door open for me to enter. "All right," he said, "if you really think it's necessary to have your little scene, come on in. But say your piece and then get out. I'm leaving for Europe in the morning and I have a lot of work to do."

There was evidence of that impending departure everywhere as he led me back through the house—dust covers over furniture, pictures taken down from the walls and carefully packed and empty shelves. The only room still

open was his den and even that was cluttered and jumbled with papers and books everywhere. The only homey note was the open fireplace at the far end in which a gas log fire blazed.

Slingerland went to stand in front of it, turning to face me, taking a cigar from his jacket pocket and holding it loosely in his fingers.

"All right, Oren," he said. "Let's have it."

"Myra's leaving me," I said.

"So?" Slingerland said.

"So!" I cried. "That's all you can say when it's because of you that she's leaving?"

Slingerland shook his head. "No," he said. "It was because of me that she stayed with you as long as she did. It gave her a convenient place to go when she needed a rest."

"That's not true," I said. "We were perfectly happy until you came along. And now you don't even have the decency to take her with you."

"Why should I?" Slingerland said, shrugging. "Besides, I doubt very much that Myra wants to go with me; she wants to get away from you."

"You're a dirty, rotten spoiler, Slingerland," I said. "But you're not going to get away with it this time. I'll make sure of that."

He smiled and cocked his head to one side. "And just

what are you going to do?" he said.

I hadn't really thought that through, but I wasn't going to let myself be stopped now. I said, "I—I'll tell everyone just what you are. When I'm done, decent people will spit when they hear your name."

His smile broadened. "And what will those 'decent' people think of you, Oren? They'll think you're even more ridiculous than they do now." He winked. "But don't let me stop you. You go right ahead and do whatever you want."

And with that he turned away and bent toward the fireplace to light a spill for his cigar. It was that, I think—that simple act of discourtesy, turning his back on me—that sent me over the edge. Without really thinking what I was doing, I grabbed up a heavy ashtray and brought it crashing down on the back of his head. He lurched forward, struck his head against the brick of the fireplace, then slumped motionless to the floor.

For a long time I stood there staring at him, my chest heaving and the ashtray still clutched in my hand. But then as the adrenalin stopped pumping and my heart slowed down, reason began to reassert itself.

I'd read someplace long before that it's easy to kill. It is,

ridiculously easy. The hard part is not getting caught. And since I had killed with so little forethought, that was going to be a hard part indeed.

Slingerland's house was secluded and there was little likelihood that anyone had seen me come that night. So I could simply leave him there and take my chances. But I was bound to be a suspect; Myra would see to that. I had no illusions that once I came under investigation I would be able to brazen it out. No, I would break and end up babbling out a confession like any other poor wretch.

So if I wanted to escape I had to divert attention from myself. The best way to do that was to provide the police with a better suspect.

My first thought, of course, was to fake a robbery. The anonymous robber who had surprised Slingerland packing and killed to avoid capture. But I dismissed that idea as too risky almost as quickly as it had come. I didn't think I'd touched anything in the house except the ashtray. But I couldn't be sure, and one stray fingerprint would be enough to bring the police swarming over me. Besides, an imaginary scapegoat meant that he would never be caught and the case never closed.

The problem was that

although there were probably plenty of men, with reasons to want to kill Slingerland, I didn't know any of them—none, in any case, against whom I could construct a believable frame up in the time I had available. So who?

I let my eyes sweep over the room. They came to rest on four small pictures Slingerland hadn't taken down yet, prints of antique cars behind his desk. I smiled as I realized where and how I could find my scapegoat.

I left him where he lay, got my driving gloves from the car, then returned to the den, pulling them on as I came. Fighting down the revulsion I felt at handling a dead body, I grabbed Slingerland under the arms and dragged him through the house to the garage.

His car was up on blocks, in storage for the long months he'd be away in Europe.

I let his body drop and hurried back to the den. Having gone this far, I couldn't stop. There was still a chance—

The phone was still connected. Thank God for that. I began leafing through the Yellow Pages looking for car rental agencies. Most of them were closed at this hour, of course, but the branch at the airport was still open and had cars available.

I told the girl who answered that I'd be there in half an hour. When she asked my name I told her Slingerland.

I made one more trip back to Slingerland's body, to pick up his wallet and his glasses. I put his wallet in my pocket and tried on the glasses. My eyes need no correction, but Slingerland's lenses were primarily magnifiers and I could fake it with them for a short period of time. I took them off, folded them and put them in my breast pocket. With them to obscure my face and perhaps a hat, a general description of Slingerland would fit me as well.

Satisfied, that I'd left nothing undone, I left the house. I left the lights burning in the den but locked up carefully to make sure no one walked in unannounced while I was gone. The key to the front door I left hidden under a brick in Slingerland's garden.

There was a strong temptation to get to the airport as fast as I could. But I forced myself to drive at a steady five MPH under the posted limits. So I was a few minutes late arriving there, but not enough to make any difference.

I parked in one of the quieter corners of the lot, away from the main building. Then before leaving the car I locked



my own wallet and papers in the glove compartment. I certainly didn't want to pull them out by mistake and ruin the whole thing at the last minute.

I'd gotten about ten feet from the car when the bulky figure of a policeman loomed up before me.

"Better be sure your car's locked, sir," he said. "There's been a lot of trouble with people breaking in around here lately."

I smiled. "It's locked, officer," I said. "And the windows are rolled up tight. I know how to discourage thieves."

"Wish more people did," he said, nodded pleasantly and strolled off, flicking his flashlight beam back and forth among the rows of parked cars. I heaved a silent sigh and hurried off myself toward the main building.

Just outside the main entrance I put on Slingerland's glasses and paused for a moment or two to let my eyes get somewhat adjusted to them. Then to cover the fact that I couldn't possibly hope to duplicate Slingerland's handwriting, I wrapped my handkerchief around my right hand in a clumsy but effective bandage and went inside.

The pert redhead at the



rental agency had most of the application papers filled out from the information I'd given her over the phone. All she needed now was my—or rather Slingerland's—driver's license number and signature. She smiled sympathetically when I fumbled left handed through his wallet and even held the paper steady while I signed. I was glad of that, because although she'd know me if she ever saw me again all she'd remember when the police asked her was the bandaged hand.

Fifteen minutes later I was back on the highway again, this time in a shiny polished up rental car. It was a Chevrolet, not as flashy as Slingerland's limousine. But it would do.

I parked it in Slingerland's drive, got the key from under the brick where I'd hidden it and went inside. Everything was as I'd left it, including Slingerland. I picked him up under the arms again, dragged him out to the car and dumped him unceremoniously into the trunk. I kept his wallet but his glasses I threw in on top of him before slamming the trunk lid down. And then I went back into the house to finish packing for him, because everything had to look as if he had finished earlier than he'd expected and had decided on one last fling before leaving for Europe in the morning.

Some of the papers I filed, others I burned in the gas fire. But only after the last of them had been disposed of one way or the other did I leave. And even then I locked the house just as Slingerland himself would have done.

I drove north. I was looking for a car thief, of course—someone to take the car and unwittingly Slingerland's body and the guilt with it. I thought I knew the place to find one—the string of roadhouses that tailed off into the country just beyond the city limits. Those that weren't gambling dens catered to the teen age trade. And teen-agers and alcohol and cars were a volatile mixture.

I stopped at the first one I came to, a garish neon lit barn called the Top Hat Club, and went inside, leaving the car unlocked and parked where a beam of light would spotlight the keys left dangling invitingly in the ignition. But when I came out half an hour later it was still there.

Well, I hadn't expected it to be easy. But when the same thing happened at the second place I stopped and then again at the third, I began to get desperate. I slammed angrily into the car there at the third place and leaned forward to turn the key, thinking that maybe I would have to abandon the car on some quiet road and hope that the police reached the right conclusions after all.

And then something cold and hard touched the back of my neck. I froze, my hand still half outstretched toward the key.

"Just go on and do what you were going to, daddy-o," a quiet voice with a hint of the south about it said from behind me. "Start the car motor and drive away from here just like nothing'd happened."

"Who are you? What do you want?"

"Never you mind who I am. Just do as I say. And as for what I want. Well, we both know what that is, don't we?"

Yes. And it had been what I'd wanted too. But not this way; this was success with a vengeance—a very real vengeance.

The man in back nudged me with the gun and I started the motor and drove off the lot.

"Now you're being sensible, daddy," the man in back said. "Although I have to say you were mighty careless earlier, walking off and leaving your car with the keys in it like that. And then flashing that big roll inside. Almost as if you were asking to be robbed."

"Look," I said, "you can have the car and the wallet and—"

"I know I can, daddy," the voice said, suddenly hard. "Now just shut up and drive."

About fifteen minutes later he nudged me with the gun again. "Okay," he said, "turn left into that little dirt road up ahead."

I was afraid to do as he said, but more afraid not to. So I turned. We went about fifty or sixty yards in on a tree lined dirt track. Then he ordered me to stop.

I braked. "Please," I began, but that was all I got out. The gun crashed against the back of my head and the darkness closed in.

I don't know how long I was unconscious, but it was still

dark when I came to, lying in the ditch beside the road. I rose to my knees, then fell back as a wave of nausea overwhelmed me. But it passed and on the third try I made it all the way to my feet.

My pockets were empty, but a quick check told me he hadn't searched far enough to find the \$5 pinned inside my sleeve. More importantly, though, the car was gone.

Sooner or later, that man with the deceptively soft southern drawl was going to find that he'd picked up more than he'd bargained for. I couldn't help but wonder what he'd do then. Not that it would make any difference. He was bound to leave a trail back to himself and the police would follow up a lot more thoroughly on a murder than on a more or less routine car theft. He'd have an interesting story to tell when they caught him. But, of course, nobody would believe him.

Smiling with the grim satisfaction that he deserved everything that was going to happen to him, I brushed myself off as best I could and started out on the long hike back to where I could get a taxi.

I had one more bad moment. Reflexively, when I saw my car where I'd left it at the airport,

my steps quickened and I stuck my hand in my pocket for the keys—only to find them gone. The thief had taken them along with the rest of the contents of my pockets.

For a moment I almost gave way to panic. But then I remembered the keys were just keys with nothing among them to identify me, not even one of those little cards the keycase manufacturers provide. Myra had carelessly thrown it away before giving me the case one Christmas. And there was a spare under the hood of the car to let me in.

I stepped forward confidently again, raised the hood and was just reaching under when the flashlight beam caught me full in the face.

"What are you doing at that car?" a harsh voice said.

I jerked around. The light in my face nearly blinded me but by shielding my eyes with my hand I could just make out that it was a policeman holding the flash. I relaxed and even smiled a bit.

"It's all right, officer," I said. "This is my car. I just lost my key."

"Sure you did," he said, advancing with his hand on his pistol.

"No, it's true," I protested. "Look, my name is Oren Wilcox. I live at 2934 Oregon

Drive. There are papers inside the car to prove it and a spare key taped to the block to let us in. Now would I know that if I were a car thief?"

He hesitated then and finally agreed to let me open the car. My picture on a bank credit card, convinced him and he apologized gruffly. "Sorry," he said. "But with the number of car thefts we've had lately we can't be too careful."

"Better too careful than not careful enough," I said and smiled with meaning he couldn't possibly have understood. Then I got in the car, drove home and slept the sleep of exhaustion.

Slingerland's body wasn't discovered until two days later, and then the papers were full of it. It took the police less than a week to run down his "murderer." His name was Webster and I got my first idea of what he looked like when his sullen hillbilly's face was plastered over the front page.

That should have been the end of it. But the following afternoon the police called for me. There were two of them, big scruffy looking men who identified themselves as Officers Magruder and Haines.

"I don't understand," I said when they'd told me they wanted to ask a few questions about the Slingerland case.

"You have his killer. What questions could you possibly want to ask me?"

"Well," Magruder said, clearing his throat, "the trouble is that Webster admits to stealing the car but claims that somebody besides Slingerland was driving it and that this somebody else had already killed Slingerland and planted the body on him."

"You can't believe that?" Or could they. No. It wasn't possible. It was probably some of Myra's maliciousness that had brought them here.

"Whether we believed it or not," Magruder went on, "we still had to check it out. And since it was a rental car we started at the rental agency. The girl there remembered Slingerland all right. He'd hurt his hand somehow. That's why his signature didn't match up with his usual one, she said. And that's a funny thing,

because when the autopsy surgeon examined Slingerland he didn't find anything wrong with either one of his hands."

I slumped back in my chair. The hand. I'd forgotten the hand.

"So that sent us checking further," Magruder said. "And one of the things we found out was that your wife and Slingerland were a hot item at one time. Which leads to another funny thing. You were out at the airport the night the car was rented there. The officer on duty in the parking lot remembers he mistook you for a car thief."

"So we'd like to ask you a few questions about what you were doing out there and why all your identification was locked in your car. And then we'd like to take you downtown so that Webster and that redheaded agency girl can have a good long look at you."

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# SHE SHALL HAVE MURDER

by  
HERBERT  
HARRIS



She had known how to get places, that sloe-eyed girl.  
Now she had gone where she hadn't planned—hell. . . .

INSPECTOR DAWSON was grimacing, sadly and thoughtfully, as he turned slowly away from the body of the girl.

Sandra Lake had been beautiful and vivacious in life. Now, as she lay spreadeagled in an ungainly posture, there was a pathetic ugliness in the dead eyes, the sagging mouth, the

purple bruises left by strong, thick fingers to mar the whiteness of the slender throat.

"I loathe this sort of case," he told Detective-Sergeant Mills. "It's like looking at a mangled bird left lying in the roadway."

Mills nodded. "Yes, sir—and a songbird at that. I heard her

sing once at a club. She wasn't bad. Never made the top, of course. Mostly just nice to look at."

Dawson had only half an ear on his sergeant. He was running his eyes over the dead girl's apartment—decorated fairly expensively but in a gaudy, garish way that revealed lack of taste.

He turned as Mrs. Purkiss, the landlady, appeared in the doorway, a thin, nervous-looking woman with sparse grey hair.

"I expect you knew Miss Lake pretty well?" Dawson began.

"Fairly well, sir," the landlady answered cautiously. "I mean, she's been here a year."

"Yes. What sort of girl was she, would you say?"

"Very attractive, o'course. Gay personality an' all that."

"And liable to go to some fellow's head?"

"Oh, she'd do that all right, sir."

"Did she have a lot of men calling on her?"

Mrs. Purkiss pursed her thin lips and narrowed her eyes. "If you're implying that she was one of *that sort*, the answer is no. There's a very strict rule here and, mark my words, Inspector, nothing goes on here that I don't know about!"

"Don't misunderstand me," Dawson said, trying not to

smile in company with Sergeant Mills. "I was merely suggesting that a girl like this must have had some men friends?"

"Well, naturally, sir... a few. Only two that you might call regular friends."

The inspector nodded. "I think we know those two." He held out a hand towards his sergeant, who passed him a diary.

"We found this diary of Miss Lake's," he told the landlady. "She mentions two men quite frequently. A Mr. Len Saxby, who apparently works as a free-lance photographer for some pop-record paper. And a Mr. Barry Fuller, who runs a used-car business and seems a bit better off."

"Yes, I know the two gentlemen," Mrs. Purkiss said. "And everything proper and perfectly above-board. I do assure you."

"Yes, I'm sure," Dawson said, as young Mills hid another smile behind his hand. "I think you told the sergeant that you were out last night?"

The landlady nodded sadly. "More's the pity, sir. I was visiting my sister, who's been ill. I understand Miss Lake was murdered about ten o'clock last night, which was about a half hour before I got back."

Dawson frowned. He took a turn up and down the room.



"Did you see either Mr. Saxby or Mr. Fuller yesterday?"

"Oh, yes, sir, I saw Mr. Fuller!"

Dawson looked at her sharply. "You did? What time?"

"Lunch time, Inspector. Mr. Fuller called and took her to lunch."

"And afterwards?"

"He brought her back, o'course, but didn't stay. He knew I wouldn't have him staying up there all afternoon."

"Quite. And Miss Lake, how did she seem?"

"Oh, happy, sir. Very happy. I could hear her singing up there. She was musical, you know. Had a very sweet voice."

"Yes. And Mr. Fuller left her just after lunch." Dawson exchanged a frown with Sergeant Mills. The dead girl hadn't quarrelled with him, anyway. So would Fuller return later and strangle her?

"You say you didn't see Mr. Saxby yesterday. Has he been here recently?"

"Yes, Inspector. Two or three days ago."

"Thank you, Mrs. Purkiss, you've been very helpful."

Dawson said to Mills when they were outside: "I'd rather like a talk with Mr. Len Saxby. You said he lives quite close?"

"Yes, just up the road. I'll take you there."

The free-lance photographer Len Saxby had a top-floor studio in a crumbling Victorian house. He used a large former pantry as a darkroom, and emerged from this wiping his hands when the C.I.D. men called on him.

He was a pleasant, frank-faced young man with untidy fair hair. His expression was at the moment grim, and there were dark rims round his eyes.

"I can guess why you're here," he said to the C.I.D. men. "It was all in the morning's paper about Sandra." He turned away, bowing his head. "To save you asking the question—yes, I knew her intimately."

Dawson lifted his eyebrows in an unspoken question.

"I loved her—worshipped her," Saxby went on. "I hoped that she might marry me."

Dawson asked bluntly: "Did you know about a man called Barry Fuller?"

Saxby turned his head sharply, his face suddenly angry, and then relaxed, shrugging.

"Sandra was infatuated by him, that's all. He'd made money in a car business. He was the flashy type, buying her presents and all that. She... she didn't feel the same way about him like she felt about me."

While Dawson and the

photographer talked, Mills had wandered across to a small table under a tall studio window. He picked up two ten-by-eight glossy prints that lay on the table, stood looking at them for a moment, then took them across to Dawson.

Dawson studied the prints Mills handed to him, then looked at Saxby.

"These two pictures are of Miss Lake—taken fairly recently?"

"Yes. Only two or three days ago. That was the last time I saw her. You... you won't want to seize the negatives or anything?"

"I don't think so... why?"

Tears were plainly visible in Saxby's eyes. "These are the only two recent pictures I've got of her. I took some a long while ago, when she sang at a club, for a pop-record paper. They didn't do her justice."

"These made her look very beautiful," Dawson said with sincerity. "Full face and profile. Quite lifelike."

"I shall treasure them," Saxby said in a shaky voice.

"I'm sure you will. So I wouldn't dream of taking the negatives from you."

"Thank you." Saxby turned away, burying his face in his hands. "I loved her," he said with a sob in his voice. "I loved her."

Dawson gripped his arm sympathetically. "We may be back again, Mr. Saxby. Don't take it too hard." He signalled to Mills with a nod of his head, and they went quickly out.

In the street, Dawson said: "I quite like that young man. I'm as sorry as hell for him."

"Me, too," Mills answered.

"Let's see what Mr. Fuller looks like, shall we?" The inspector pulled a face.

The sergeant grinned and turned the car in the direction of a garage nearer the edge of the town.

As they'd expected, Barry Fuller was less open-faced. He was sleekly dark, a little too handsome to appeal to any member of his own sex.

"It's about Sandra Lake, isn't it?" he said, going right into the attack, but watching the inspector warily.

"You admit you were friendly?"

"All right, yes—very friendly."

"A sort of hit-and-run affair, was it?"

Fuller swallowed. "At first maybe, yes. She was good for a bit of fun. But then I got fond of her."

"And she was fond of you?"

"Yes, I think she was."

Dawson didn't like Fuller very much, but was doing his best not to be prejudiced.

"You were with her yesterday?"

"Yes," Fuller replied frankly. "I took her to lunch."

"And that was all?"

"Well, we went to an antique shop where she had seen something she wanted."

"What was that?"

"Some very unique earrings. She was musical, you know."

Dawson nodded.

"The earrings were small harps. In gold. Quite expensive, but I bought them for her. I even fixed them on for her, and we laughed and I said, 'She shall have music wherever she goes.'"

Dawson searched the man's face. "You knew about a Len Saxby?"

Fuller's reaction was a calm, derisive smile. "Yes, she'd mentioned him. He used to hang round her, driving her nuts. She would hardly put him before me, Inspector—I mean, he hadn't any money."

"That's important, isn't it?"

Dawson said ironically. "Well, that'll do for now. We may want to talk to you again."

"Any time," Fuller answered.

Dawson said, as they scrambled into the car: "Back to Len Saxby's place."

Sergeant Mills nodded. "I guessed you'd say that."

The photographer looked quite ill when he faced the C.I.D. men on their second

visit. His skin looked paler, and the rings round his tired eyes looked ever blacker.

"Mr. Saxby," Dawson began, coming straight to the point, "evidence has come to light which shows that your visit to Miss Sandra Lake was not two or three days ago, as you told us. You were, in fact, with her only last night."

Saxby regarded him with blank, lustreless eyes, then he turned away, his head lowered miserably.

"True, isn't it?"

Saxby answered in little more than a whisper: "Yes. I was with her. She said she'd decided to go away with Fuller. I was just a nuisance, she said, and she didn't want me hanging round all the time. I saw red. I got hold of her throat. . ."

"I see."

Saxby turned, his face creased with puzzlement. "Who told you I was with her? Mrs. Purkiss was out."

"Her earrings told us," Dawson said. "Those golden harps. They showed up beautifully in your pictures. And, you see, Mr. Saxby, your rival didn't buy them for her until yesterday afternoon."

Saxby looked at the C.I.D. men in stunned silence. Then quietly he said: "All right, I'm ready. But I did love her, you know. I did love her."

—A TAUT STORY OF DEATH IN THE NIGHT



# THE SEVEN STRANGERS

by CLARK HOWARD

*Dark and bloody was the path they followed,  
the loser from the Big House with a fool  
proof gamble for a million and his unseen  
shadow, who had promised to get it all or die . . .*

**R**obby Clad arrived in Los Angeles at 8:05 A.M. The cheap suit they had given him at the prison was wrinkled from sitting up two nights in a chair coach. He had twelve dollars in his pocket, and no luggage. Leaving the depot, Clad crossed Alameda and turned south on Main. His brow grew moist and twice his stomach jumped nervously. First day on the street, he thought. Danker had told him it would be like that.

He lighted a cigarette and forced himself to relax.

He walked on down Main, climbed the rear steps of City Hall, and went through the big

municipal building to Temple Street. Emerging from the front entrance, he moved to the side of the wide Temple Street portico and stood staring at a building directly across the street. He continued to stare for a long time.

The building that held Clad's intent interest was the Hall of Records of Los Angeles County. It was a building he had visualized many times in his prison daydreams. He had studied diagrams of its interior and exterior at least a thousand times. Even now his eyes automatically darted from place to place, checking the location of doors, steps, parking lot entrance, guard shacks and other

points Danker had hammered into his memory.

Seeing the building now in its natural state made Clad feel better.

It's okay, he thought. Everything's the way it should be, right down to the last brick. It was going to work out fine. He could feel it inside.

Clad walked down the steps. He made his way through the busy downtown streets to an office building on south Hill. On the seventh floor he entered the suite of an attorney named Earl Bowser. He gave his name to a receptionist and a moment later was shown into a private office where a smartly dressed, well preserved man in his middle fifties sat behind a huge walnut desk.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Clad?" asked Earl Bowser.

"Fred Danker sent me," Clad said. "I'm to pick up a package."

"Oh, yes," the lawyer smiled, "I've been expecting you. How is Fred?"

"Getting older. He wants out bad."

"Yes. Yes, I know." Bowser sighed heavily. "It's difficult, you know. He's doing a tough bit; bank robbery with two prior convictions."

"Paroles can be bought," Clad said pointedly.

"They take a great deal of

money," Bowser said, "especially in a case like Fred's."

Clad's eyes narrowed suspiciously. "Danker said he left a big bundle with you when he got sent up."

"He did," Bowser admitted, "but—"

"You're supposed to have operating money for me. Sixty-five grand. Have you got it?"

Bowser forced a smile. "Of course, of course." He hesitated for a moment. "I suppose it's to set up a job to get more cash for Fred?"

"You suppose right," Clad said.

"What kind of a job is it?"

Clad shook his head. "No details, Bowser. Danker wants the whole thing handled by me. You just furnish the money out of the bundle Danker left with you."

Bowser frowned and for a moment felt a twinge of fear. It sounded like Danker no longer trusted him. Nervously he wondered if Danker could possibly have found out that most of the money was gone; that more than a hundred thousand dollars Danker had left with him for safekeeping had been used, not in trying to make connections with Danker's parole, but wasted away over dice tables, down racetracks, across bars and in various beds. He'd even had to borrow some money to

make up the sixty-five thousand for this hoodlum Clad.

But no, he was certain Danker had no knowledge of his financial infidelity. If he had, Clad would be here not for money but for blood.

"However Fred wants it handled," the lawyer said at last. "The money's in the safe in the other office; I'll get it for you."

Bowser left the room and crossed the reception area to a second office. Stretched out on a leather couch there was a hard, handsome, square-jawed young man named Ralph Nash. He was a licensed private detective and wore a shoulder holster carrying a heavy Magnum automatic.

"Get up, Ralph," Bowser said urgently. "There's a man in the other office I want followed. He's setting up a job for Fred Danker. I want to know every move he makes."

Nash sat up. "Who is he?"

"His name is Clad, that's all I know. He's just out of Leavenworth."

"Big deal," said Nash. He took the Magnum from under his arm and casually checked its mechanism.

"Listen, Ralph," the lawyer said tensely, "this could be something really big. Danker has allotted sixty-five grand just for front money. This could be

a million-dollar job. Do you understand that?" He smiled. "There may be a golden opportunity here for both of us, Ralph. Do you get what I mean?"

Nash nodded slowly. "Sure, I get what you mean. Don't worry; I'll stay with him."

"Good." Bowser opened a wall safe and removed a fat manila envelope. He returned to the office where Clad waited.

"Here's your money. Will I be seeing you again?"

"Not if I'm lucky," said Clad. He took the envelope and left.

As Clad walked out of the lobby downstairs, Ralph Nash stepped from a fire exit and followed him.

Clad went into the first department store he came to and bought a suitcase and some new clothes. Next he stopped at a drugstore and picked up a razor, toilet articles, a bottle of bourbon and a Los Angeles street guide. It was nearly noon when he checked into a third rate hotel near the bus depot.

In his room, Clad poured a drink and stretched out on the bed to rest. As always in his spare moments, he thought of Lee. He wondered how she looked after twelve years. And how she felt. And he wondered about Johnny, her brother; John Emanuel Dakotah Deep



Rivers, full-blooded Mescalero Apache. Staff Sergeant John Deep Rivers had been Clad's right hand from Omaha Beach nearly all the way to Berlin. What a pair they had made: Lieutenant Clad and Sergeant Deep Rivers, the storied Kraut Killers.

But more than that, he and Johnny had been friends. Real friends, the kind who would bleed for each other. On their last stateside leave together, Johnny had made Clad come home with him to the Isleta Reservation, just south of Albuquerque. Clad had not wanted to, but Johnny had insisted; the Indian knew Clad had no family, no place to go, so he took him to the reservation. There Clad met Johnny's mother and grandparents. And there he met Lee, Johnny's sister.

Lee had been seventeen that summer, five years younger than Clad. Brown-skinned, black-haired, black-eyed, she had a beautiful child's face and a beautiful woman's body. Clad fell in love with her the first moment he saw her.

"I'm coming back for her, Johnny," he told his friend on the day they left for New York to board the troopship. "She's promised to wait for me."

"You are the first man who has loved her," the Indian said.

"For an Apache girl that is very important. She will wait."

And now, Clad thought, he was coming back. After twelve long years.

ROBBY CLAD left his hotel at three o'clock and took a cab out the Ventura Freeway to Studio City. Nash, in another cab, stayed close behind him.

Just past Laurel Canyon Drive, Clad got out of the taxi and walked back a block to a small photographer's studio. A muscular, handsome man in a tight tee shirt came from behind a partition and stood across the counter from Clad.

"Hello, Mitch," Clad said.

The big man forced a smile. "I don't believe I know you, friend," he said.

"You don't, and I'm not your friend," Clad told him flatly. "But we do have a mutual acquaintance. Fred sends his love."

Mitch's smile widened but it was still forced. "Fred. Sure. How is old Fred anyway? You mean Fred Miller of Reno, don't you?"

"No," said Clad softly, "I mean Fred Danker of Leavenworth penitentiary."

Mitch's smile turned cold. "How do I know you know Fred?"

"You don't. But Fred said if you gave me any lip I should

remind you that you're still wanted in Illinois as an accessory on a felony manslaughter charge. Something to do with a hit-and-run, I think he said."

The photographer flushed deeply and gritted his teeth. "All right. What do you want with me?"

"I want two decals," Clad told him. "Exact reproductions of the County of Los Angeles seal, so they'll look like the insignia the county uses on all their cars and trucks."

"How the hell do you expect me to get something like that?" Mitch complained.

"You're a photographer, aren't you?" Clad snapped. "Go down to the Civic Center, take a picture of a county vehicle, blow it up, cut out the insignia, reduce it to the right size, get a litho plate made and have it printed on decal backing. That's all there is to it."

Mitch's eyes narrowed suspiciously. "How do you know it can be done that way?"

Clad smiled. "Danker checked it out with a counterfeiter in the Joint. It can be done. Any more questions?"

Mitch shook his head silently.

"I'll have somebody pick them up two weeks from today, and they'd better be perfect." Clad took a pre-counted roll of



bills from his pocket and tossed it on the counter. "Here's a grand. Danker doesn't want you working for nothing, even if you do run down people in the street and leave them to die."

The muscle-bound photographer was livid with anger as Clad left and walked down to the corner to a taxi stand. Nash, waiting in a doorway nearby, continued to follow him.

Clad's next stop was a novelty shop in Hollywood. The owner's name was Lipsky. He was better known in underworld circles as Lippy the Gun. His sole passion in life was firearms.

"I'll need two .45 auto-matics," Clad told him. "I want Colts, the military type with full hammers. And I'll want a chopper too."

The gun dealer frowned. "Choppers ain't easy to come by no more," he remarked.

"Danker said for a price you could deliver anything I wanted." Clad tapped his coat pocket. "I've got the price. How about it?"

"Can you give me two, three weeks?"

"Two, at the outside."

"Okay. How's twenty-five hundred sound?"

Clad paid him without a word. "Two weeks from today. And make sure that chopper's got a clean bore; no pits, no rust. If it blows up on me—"

"It'll be straight," Lippy the Gun assured him.

Clad left the novelty shop and took a cab back to his hotel. Ralph Nash, who had now been following the busy ex-convict since ten o'clock that morning, stepped into a phone booth in the lobby and called a friend of his, an ex-pug named Punch, to come over to the hotel and relieve him for the night. By now it had become clear to Nash that shadowing Robby Clad definitely was not a one-man job.

At nine o'clock that evening, Clad met Nicky Lamont in a

poolroom in East Los Angeles. It was easy for Clad to spot Nicky; the young man was a dead-ringer for his father, Charley Lamont, who still had seventeen years to serve in Leavenworth for interstate commerce hijacking and attempted escape.

"You the guy that called?" Nicky asked when Clad approached him.

"Yeah. Where can we talk?"

Nicky led him to a jalopy parked behind the pool hall.

"How's my old man doing?" he asked eagerly.

Clad shrugged. "Getting along. Got a good job, keeps out of trouble."

"Do you think he'll ever get out?" Nicky asked hopefully.

"I doubt it," Clad said quietly. "He's nearly fifty now. He could get sprung in maybe ten years but—" His words trailed off.

"But what?" Nicky prompted.

"Charley won't live that long, kid. He's got a lot of trouble with his insides. He'll go two, maybe three more years, and that's it."

Nicky Lamont sat silently for several minutes. Clad lighted a cigarette and passed it to him in the dimness. He let Nicky finish the cigarette before he spoke again.

"A friend of your old man's heard about your mother dying

and how you and your sister got stuck as wards of your stepfather," Clad said at last. "He figured you might like a chance to grab a bundle of quick cash so you and your sister could cut out on your own if you wanted to."

"A job?" said Nick.

Clad nodded. "A heist. You wouldn't be part of the inside action, though; wouldn't even carry an iron. You'd get a flat fee for performing certain duties at a prearranged time. You'd be in heavy heat for about ten minutes at the most."

"How much would I get?"

"Twenty-five G's."

Nick Lamont whistled softly. "That's a lot of bread."

"We want a man we can rely on. You're Charley Lamont's kid and Charley is first-rate; we figure you ought to be too."

"What do I have to do?"

"Several things. During the next four weeks you'll locate and rent a one-car garage within a certain area I designate; you'll buy a used panel truck of a make and model I specify; you'll have the truck painted a certain color; you'll steal two license plates from two different vehicles in two different parts of the city; and you'll pick up two packages at addresses I give you and leave them in the truck in the garage."

"Then, on a date I'll set

later, you'll drive me from the garage to the Civic Center downtown, drop me off, and return to the same place exactly thirteen minutes later to pick up me and another man. You'll take us to a second location about three minutes drive away and unload us. You'll get paid then and be on your way. Should take you no more than five minutes to get completely in the clear."

Nicky Lamont gently bit his lower lip as he weighed Clad's words. He thought of his mother, now buried; of his father, also buried, but in a different kind of grave; of his sister Laura, seventeen years old. He thought of his stepfather, Owen; the habit he'd fallen into lately of always looking so closely at Laura, always finding an excuse to go into her room when she was dressing. Nick knew if it kept on the way it was going, he'd have to kill Owen some day.

"Okay," he told Clad, "count me in."

"Good." Clad gave him an envelope containing seven thousand dollars and precise written instructions for his part of the job. "Five thousand is your down payment. Fifteen hundred is to buy the truck. The other five bills is a down payment for a second guy I need. Somebody with an old

jalopy like this one. He'll have a very simple job; all he has to do is pull into a certain parking lot at a given time and ram a parked car. The worst he can get for it is ten days for reckless driving. The job pays five grand. Know anybody?"

"Sure," Nicky grinned, "just the guy. He's my best friend. This is his car we're sitting in. His name is—"

"I'm not interested in his name," Clad cut in. "If you say he's okay, get him. He'll take orders from you; it's all there in the instructions."

They got out of the car and walked back around to the street.

"I'll get in touch with you three weeks from today," Clad told him. "Have everything set up. And stay out of trouble until then; don't go flashing that money around, hear?"

"Right."

Clad left Nicky Lamont in front of the pool hall and walked back the way he had come.

ROBBY CLAD left his hotel without shaving the next morning. He took a cab to the Sports Arena, got out and walked two blocks to a barber shop.

"Hello, Gino," he said casually to a short, balding Italian as he seated himself in the chair.

"How are you?" Gino Litti replied, smiling, knowing he had never seen the man before. With a practiced eye Gino noted Clad's new clothes, short haircut and the absence of a suntan. Just out, Litti decided.

"Hey, Leo," he said to the one other barber on duty, "how's about going down the street for some coffee?"

The barber named Leo left them alone in the shop.

"Who are you?" Litti asked easily as he lowered the chair to shave position.

"Friend of Fred's."

"Big Fred?" Gino grinned. "How is he?"

"Getting along. Wants out, naturally."

"Naturally. He send you to see me?"

"Yeah. Thought you might be interested in a little outside work on a set-up. Nothing complicated, just routine stuff. Very little heat. Almost no chance of being tagged."

"Like to help you out, friend," Gino said, "but I've quit."

Clad frowned. "You've what?"

"Yeah," Gino smiled, "I know it sounds like a lot of sliced salami, but it's straight. I'm going home to Italy. I got a nice little stake put away and back home I'll be able to live pretty good. I got a wife back

there and a daughter almost grown now. Fred ever tell you?"

"No," Clad said softly, "no, he didn't. Look, Gino, this is a real pushover Fred set up. No risk at all—"

"There's always risk," Gino said wisely.

"Here," Clad prompted, "just read this."

He handed Gino a sheet of instructions similar to the one he had given Nicky Lamont. Gino put a hot towel on Clad's face and read while Clad's beard steamed soft.

"Not bad," the barber admitted when he finished the page. "Nothing else to it?"

"That's it as far as you're concerned."

Gino rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "What's your offer?"

"Ten grand."

"You're about five light. I would maybe consider it for fifteen."

"Would you go for fifteen? Come in right now?"

Gino shrugged. "Yeah, I think maybe I come for fifteen."

"Okay," said Clad, "I'll give you five off my end just to keep the thing running smoothly."

"It's a deal then," said Gino. He lathered Clad's face and gave him a quick, close, expert

shave. "You'd better get some sun," he said when he had finished and Clad was out of the chair, "you as pale as a convict."

Clad laughed and walked out of the shop.

Ralph Nash was sitting in a rented car across the street as Clad left. He pulled away from the curb and followed the taxi Clad boarded at the corner. The cab proceeded onto the Harbor Freeway, then headed downtown. Twenty minutes later it drew up in front of Union Station and Clad got out.

Nash parked neatly in a red zone marked TAXIS ONLY. He followed Clad into the depot waiting room and fell in directly behind him at one of the ticket windows.

"Two tickets for Albuquerque," he heard Clad tell the ticket agent. "A single roomette on the one o'clock train day after tomorrow, and another single roomette on the same train for the twenty-fourth."

The agent checked his reservations schedule and prepared the tickets.

"Car eleven, roomette eight for day after tomorrow," the agent said tonelessly, "and car two, roomette two for the twenty-fourth."

"Fine," Clad said. He paid for the tickets and left the

window. Nash stepped up in his place.

"Do you have a schedule of trains to Phoenix?" he asked. The agent handed him a pamphlet and Nash turned to follow Clad from the station.

Just after eight o'clock that evening, Clad visited the Fox Club, a draw poker parlor in Gardena in the southern section of the county. He edged his way through the smoke-topped crowd and at the bar met a man named Harry Stretz.

Stretz was fifty years old. He had never held a legitimate job in his life. He had lived an easy existence away from the everyday problems that haunt the average man. After half a century of life, he had not one grey hair, had no paunch, did not wear glasses, and still had every tooth he had when he was twenty. He looked good, exceptionally good.

There was, however, one physical problem that, could it have been seen, would have marred the picture of perfect health presented by Harry Stretz. He had coronary thrombosis. His heart was apt to stop beating at any moment. Clad, of course, did not know that, because Fred Danker, back in Leavenworth, had not known it. If Danker had known it, Clad would not have been there.

The two men had a drink at

the bar, then retired to the liquor storeroom which the bartender, a friend of Harry's, let them use for the private portion of their conversation. They sat on cases of whiskey and Clad outlined what Harry's part of the job would be if he decided to come in on it.

"The only touchy part of it might be your getting the cab driving job," Clad pointed out. "You've got no past employment record, no references—"

"I'll get around that," Stretz assured him. "I can dummy up some references and have friends of mine verify them."

Clad smiled. "Fred said you were resourceful. Okay then, you're in. Right?"

"Right," Stretz affirmed.

Clad gave him five thousand dollars. "You'll get the balance when you drop off the man you'll be driving. I'll contact you again in three weeks."

They returned to the bar, had another drink, and parted.

It was falling into place, Clad thought as he rode back to Los Angeles on the bus. It was falling into place nicely. He looked out the window at the blackness. Sighing softly, he thought again of Lee.

He pictured in his mind the way she had looked their last morning together. Early light had been settling gently between the rocks on a low hill





behind the adobe Indian house of the Deep Rivers family. Lee's Indian blankets had stretched faded blues and reds over the yellow sand. Her long black hair had been a black void across the colors. Their love had been a passionate tribute to the morning desert. It had been their desert that dawn, their sky, their world.

It will be that way again, he thought; and with the thought came a tight line of worry across his mouth. The old doubts returned; the old

Leavenworth doubts. Suppose she was not there? Suppose she had gone away and no one knew where? Worse still, suppose she had married, suppose she had an Indian husband and half a dozen Indian kids?

No, it won't be like that, he told himself for perhaps the ten thousandth time. She'll be there. I know she'll be there. She'll be waiting, just like she said she would.

He got off the bus downtown and walked to his hotel. Half an hour after he got to his room, he was sleeping; fitfully, uncomfortably, dreaming dreams about barred windows, barred doors, and the nerve-tearing nocturnal noises of two thousand men in a cell block at night.

It was the same sleep he had slept every night during the ten years he had been inside—

At eleven the next morning Clad checked out of the hotel and took a cab to Union Station. His train was not due to leave for two hours, but he had one more thing to do before he departed the city. He checked his bag in a dime locker and, as he had done on his first day back, walked from the terminal to the Civic Center. This time, instead of just standing across the street looking at the Hall of Records, he went inside.

He had never been in the

building in his life, but he knew with precise exactness every step he took. Fifty steps along the walk to the double entrance doors. Through the doors, down a long corridor another fifty steps to a service elevator. Next to the elevator a heavy fire door, never locked. Up the stairs, eighty-nine seconds to the third floor. A sharp right on the third floor to a bank of telephone booths. Clad entered one of them, put the receiver to his ear without depositing a dime.

From the booth he could see five public elevators on two sides of the hall. In a wall facing the booth, a door with a frosted glass pane marked *Private*; this a small coffee room used by building employees. To the right a few feet, a set of double doors with clear glass panes: the entrance to Room 300, Hall of Records. Inside those doors, he knew, was a guard desk; then a row of teller cages; seventeen steps beyond them, a buzzer-controlled door; a small room behind it; another room, larger, beyond the first, and then—jackpot!

Clad was sweating now, just thinking about it. He left the booth and walked casually over to the elevators. Waiting for the car, he glanced again at the doors of Room 300. The black lettering on the glass stared at

him boldly: LOS ANGELES COUNTY TREASURER.

Clad wet his lips as the elevator door opened and he turned away from the room where, for better or worse, his future lay.

RALPH NASH sat on the couch in Martin Bowser's office. The lawyer was behind his desk, hands folded, listening to Nash's report.

"Well," Bowser said when Nash finished, "it looks like our boy is getting ready to dump the County Treasurer's office." He smiled at Nash. "I knew it was going to be a big one."

"How big do you figure?" asked Nash.

Bowser pursed his lips thoughtfully. "Million, million-and-a-quarter."

Nash whistled. "That's a lot of bread."

"Yes," Bowser said quietly, "yes, it is." He got up to put together a drink. "Do you remember what I told you, Ralph, the day Clad came here?"

"You mean about this being a golden opportunity; I remember."

"Well, I wasn't just talking; I meant it." Bowser twirled the solitary ice cube in his drink. "I'm going to level with you, Ralph. I'm in a bind; several binds, as a matter of fact. The

D.A.'s office is starting some pressure about a couple of witnesses that weren't exactly on the up and up. The Bar Association is looking into my relationships with the so-called underworld element. And on top of it all, my financial situation is—well, not as comfortable as it might appear."

The lawyer sighed heavily. "I'm fed up with the whole rat race, Ralph. I'm ready to make a killing and get out."

"What do you have in mind, counselor?" Nash asked.

"The proceeds of Clad's stickup. You and I, Ralph. The whole bundle." He leaned forward on the desk. "You're pretty handy with that gun you carry. You could put the arm on these boys right after the job, hijack the money, and leave them empty-handed right in the middle of the dragnet that'll be out for them. I could arrange with half a dozen local banks to transfer the money into negotiable securities; it would all be set up in advance. Within hours we could be on our way to Argentina. How about it?"

Nash rubbed his chin thoughtfully. It was risky, the whole thing was risky. But the rewards were great. A million dollars, maybe more. A man could live good with half a pie like that. Get himself a villa in

South America where he couldn't be extradited. Wear fine clothes, drink good liquor, drive a hot little foreign sports car, find himself one of those dark Latin broads—

"How about it, Ralph?" prompted Bowser.

"I'll play along, counselor," Nash decided quickly . . .

Robby Clad's train arrived in Albuquerque at 8:10 in the morning. Carrying his suitcase in one hand, he walked over to the bus depot and checked the schedule. The next departure for Isleta, the reservation settlement, was in fifteen minutes. Clad had a Coke and waited.

On the bus he took a rear seat and opened a window. Resting his head back, he closed his eyes and thought about the ten years that had passed since he last rode a bus to Isleta. Ten years of nightmarish memories, beginning with D-Day.

His platoon had lined the ship's railing. The nets were over the side, landing boats splashing in the choppy waters below them. Johnny Deep Rivers had drawn him aside and without explanation pushed up the left sleeve of Clad's jacket and shirt. With his commando knife he had sliced a quick, even cut across Clad's forearm, then done the same to his own arm. He had pressed his arm against Clad's, fusing together

the two open cuts and mixing the warm blood.

"Now we are brothers," John Deep Rivers had said solemnly. Minutes later, along with thousands of others, all brothers that day, they had assaulted the coast of France.

Somewhere between Omaha Beach and the German border, Johnny had taken a burst of machine gun fire in his right shoulder. He had been evacuated and Clad had not seen him again. Letters he later received from Lee told him that Johnny was in a hospital and in time would recover.

After V-E Day, Clad moved into Berlin with the armies of occupation. He was transferred into Intelligence and assigned to a group whose job it was to rout out and apprehend war criminals. The hunters worked in teams of two. Clad's partner and superior officer was Major Dan Dunbar.

Clad and the major had been tracking down a high-level gestapo man for more than a month when they finally located him in an old farmhouse near Wiesbaden. He had been living there incognito since Berlin fell. When they tried to take him, the Nazi made a break. Clad and the major gunned him down.

It was later, while making a routine search of the house,

that they found the treasure. The trunk was in the cellar, pushed back in a dark corner. It had not even been locked. Inside it they found forty waterproof bags of U. S. currency. Each bag contained fifty thousand dollars.

Two million dollars had been far too great a temptation for either of them. Instead of reporting their discovery, they hid the money and devised a plan to smuggle it back home. Clad was returned to New Jersey and discharged a few months later. He went to New York and rented an apartment. A short time after that he began receiving weekly packages from a small town in Switzerland. The packages contained wooden figurines, hand-carved by Swiss craftsmen, then hollowed out by the major and stuffed with money.

Five months later the major came home. He and Clad were right in the middle of dividing their loot when the apartment door was kicked in by a combined team of agents from the F.B.I., the Treasury Department, and Army Intelligence.

The shock of being arrested was mild compared to the incredulity they experienced when they were formally charged in the federal court with smuggling counterfeit money into the country. They

could not convince the court that they believed the money to be real, that they thought of themselves as stealing only from the Nazis. Both men were tried and given mandatory ten-year sentences.

And that, thought Clad, had been that.

But now it was over, now he was out. Ten years had been taken out of his life. More than three thousand nights had been taken away from him and Lee. But the time had come to settle accounts. Soon he would have Lee again, and soon he would have his hands on another million dollars. And this time it would not be counterfeit.

Clad got off the bus at Isleta. He crossed the highway and made his way slowly past the huts and shacks of Indian families that lived on the edge of the reservation. It hasn't changed much, he thought as he looked at the squalor all around him. Indians are still third-class Americans, thanks to the federal government. His lips tightened bitterly as he walked on.

A plump, frowning Indian woman was sweeping the porch when he got to the house. Clad had never seen her before. His stomach convulsed frantically at the thought that Lee might not live there anymore.

"Deep Rivers?" Clad asked, pointing to the house.

"No home," said the woman.

Clad relaxed. He stepped onto the porch and reached for the screendoor. "I'll wait for them."

"No wait." The old woman shook her head emphatically. "No go in."

Clad put down his suitcase and rolled up his left sleeve. He showed the woman the scar left by Johnny's commando knife. "I am a brother to John Deep Rivers," he told her.

The old woman nodded and stepped off the porch. Clad watched her move off down the dusty road to the next house.

He went inside and walked around. The little house had changed some, but not much. On the mantle above the adobe fireplace were pictures of Johnny's mother and grandparents; pictures trimmed in black to indicate their passing. Clad felt sorry that they were dead; he knew it had made the years just that much lonelier for Lee.

He looked around some more. In one of the bedrooms he picked up a nightgown from the unmade bed and held it to his face. At once the fragrance of his Indian woman filled his nostrils. She's here, he thought. No more guessing or thinking or hoping. Lee was there. Still sleeping in the same bed she

once shared with her mother. And there was only one pillow on the bed now. She was there, and she had waited.

Clad sighed heavily. Suddenly very tired, he lay down across her bed and went to sleep.

BACK IN Los Angeles, Mitchell Yargo, the photographer, finally worked up enough nerve to go out and take the picture he needed to make Clad a decal of the County of Los Angeles seal. He did not want to do it, did not want any part of it; he was pulling down two-fifty to three hundred a week with his stag movie rentals and similar photographic work, and getting mixed up in a scheme of Fred Danker's was something he easily could have done without. But Danker had him, had him good, and there was nothing he could do about it. Either play along or face a bit in the Illinois pen. Reluctantly, Yargo loaded his Leica with fine grain film and headed for the Civic Center to photograph the door of a county vehicle.

At that same time, Nicky Lamont was driving a 1955 Chevrolet panel truck back from Culver City where he had just bought it. In a few minutes he would park it in a garage he had rented on Lorena Street in East Los Angeles. Tomorrow he

would take it to an auto paint shop and have it painted battleship grey, the color used by the county on all its vehicles. After that, he and his friend Lenny would steal the license plates as Clad had instructed. Nick had already talked to Lenny about the heist, and Lenny had agreed to do the job of ramming a parked car in the county parking lot.

When it was all over, Nick, his sister Laura, and Lenny were all going away together. Up north, maybe, to Frisco, where he and Lenny could pool their money and buy a service station, and Lenny and Laura could get married. It was going to work out fine, Nick thought happily as he drove.

At that moment, Harry Stretz was just leaving his doctor's office after having been told that his heart condition was worse, much worse than it had been, and that he needed surgery as soon as possible to widen his arteries. But an operation like that was expensive, damned expensive. He could always go to a charity ward, he knew, but he'd be damned if he would do it. He had never asked anything from society before, and he wasn't going to start now. But his bad heart presented a serious problem in another way also. In his present condition he could not hope to

pass a routine physical examination for employment. The cab driver's job that he was supposed to get was essential to his part in the holdup, but he would never get the job unless he could pass the physical. So Harry Stretz had some fast thinking to do.

While Harry was pondering his dilemma, Lippy the Gun was leaving a small warehouse in the Watts district. Under his arm was a rectangularly shaped package about the size of a florist's box, wrapped in brown mailing paper and bound with heavy twine.

The box was heavy and Lippy occasionally shifted it from arm to arm. He boarded a northbound bus and rode for thirty minutes, then transferred to a westbound bus and rode another thirty minutes. Leaving the second bus, he walked in various directions for several blocks to satisfy himself that he had not been followed.

Only then did he proceed directly to his novelty shop, enter, and lock the door behind him, leaving the *closed* sign in the window.

In his back room, Lippy sat down at his table, unwrapped the package, and began assembling a near-new Thompson submachine gun.

Bobby Clad sat on the bed drinking a cup of coffee Lee



had brought him. It was five-thirty in the morning and Lee was getting ready to go to work. Clad watched as she slipped into her white waitress uniform and expertly wrapped her long raven hair into a Spanish bun. When she was ready to go, he walked to the door with her.

"See you tonight," she whispered when his arms were around her.

He kissed her good-by and watched her walk toward the highway to catch the bus. Then he went back inside to wake Johnny, who also worked in Albuquerque, as a stockboy in a supermarket.

"Have you thought about what I told you last night?"



Clad asked Johnny after breakfast. He had outlined the hold-up for Johnny the night before, but the Indian had not given him a firm answer one way or another.

"I'm still not sure, Rob," he told Clad now. "I never was in on anything like that before."

"Look, Johnny," said Clad, "this is a sure thing, a real pushover. It's been worked on for years. It's the chance of a lifetime."

"I know. You already told me," Johnny said quietly, "but I just don't know if I want to get mixed up in anything like that."

"What the hell's the matter with you?" Clad snapped. "Do you want to rot away on this damned reservation? You want to keep on being a flunky in a grocery store? Don't you want anything out of life?"

"Yes," Rivers nodded, "there is something that I want."

"Can you get it without money, John?"

Johnny shook his head. "I don't think so." He finished his coffee and stood up. "I will give you my answer tonight."

Johnny arrived at work at seven-thirty. He put on his white stockboy's coat and began unpacking cartons. All morning he worked on the shelves, watching the front of

the market like a hawk. He worked right through his lunch hour just to be sure he would not miss her.

Finally, about one o'clock, she came in.

Her name was Faye Welles. She was tall and blonde and had the kind of walk that suspended all male activity for as long as she was in sight. Her father was with her today; old man Tevis Welles, one of the big local ranchers, a man who twice had laid a bullwhip on the backs of Indians for staring too long and too openly at his daughter.

The old man went into the liquor department while Faye shopped for groceries. Johnny waited until she was at the checkout counter, then went up front to carry the groceries out for her.

"If my daddy sees you looking at me the way you do," Faye warned him when they were outside, he'll take his whip to you."

"If he ever tried it," Johnny smiled, "I'd hang him up by his heels with it."

"That's mighty big talk," she slurred, "for an Indian."

"I'm a big Indian," Johnny said simply. He put her groceries in old man Welles' pickup truck.

"Why do you always look at me the way you do?" Faye asked, her voice turning husky.

"For the same reason you always look back at me!"

"Well, it's crazy," she said, "for both of us."

"It wouldn't be crazy in Paris," Johnny told her.

"Paris? What's Paris got to do with it?"

"I might go there," he said easily, "with a pal of mine from the war. We've got a business deal in the works. I stand to make a lot of money. When I do, I'll be leaving the reservation, leaving this town. I'll be going to Paris to live." He moved closer to her, touched her hand on the tailgate of the truck: "Will you come with me?"

"Are you serious?" she asked incredulously.

"I'm an Indian in a white man's town; do you think I'd be fool enough to ask if I weren't serious?"

"You're a cool one," she said, amazed.

"I'll have a hundred thousand dollars," Johnny told her. "More than enough to live well in Paris. Will you come?"

Faye glanced over and saw her father coming out of the store. She smiled quickly, intimately at Johnny.

"Ask me again," she whispered, "after you get the money."

Johnny nodded and walked away before old man Welles had

seen him. Tonight, he thought, he would tell Robby to count him in on the holdup.

In Los Angeles, Ralph Nash had been alternating between following Nicky Lamont and Gino Litti. So far he had been able to pick up a few more pieces of the holdup plan, though as yet he was not sure just how the pieces fit. He knew about the truck Lamont had stored in the East Los Angeles garage. He knew also that Lamont had visited Mitch Yargo's studio and picked up two decals that were exact replicas of County of Los Angeles seals. He had learned that by using a master key and searching the garage the night after following Lamont back from Yargo's place. Also in the truck he had found two .45 automatics and a submachine gun. Lamont had picked up from Lippy the Gun.

In addition, Nash knew that Gino Litti had rented a small store on lower Sunset Boulevard near Figueroa, just minutes away from the Hall of Records. The plate glass windows had been painted black, so there was little doubt in Nash's mind that it was to be used as a drop point immediately following the holdup. That, Nash was certain, would be where his hijack of the money would have to be pulled. All he could do now was

wait. Wait, and watch Litti one day, Lamont the next, hoping to pick up some clue as to the actual date of the job. It would, he knew, be sometime before the twenty-fourth, the date of the second train reservation Clad had made. It would in all probability, he guessed, be pulled the morning of that date, but he would still have to watch Litti and Lamont closely in case it was scheduled sooner.

While Nash continued his rotating surveillance, Clad and Johnny Rivers left Albuquerque in a newly-purchased two-year-old Buick. In the trunk of the car were two suits of grey twill trousers and matching shirts, six Navy surplus chronograph wrist watches, a large metal toolbox, six empty suitcases, and a metal folding chair.

Clad was now deeply tanned and wore a mustache. Johnny, like most Indians, had virtually no beard at all, but had let his sideburns grow long and had his thick black hair full on both sides and in back.

Clad had not told Lee about the impending holdup. As far as she was concerned, he and Johnny were going to L.A. to meet with Clad's former accomplice, the Major who had been in on the money smuggling deal after the war. Clad had never told her that the Major had also been caught; she was under the

impression that he had managed to escape with all the money. That, she thought, was the reason for the L.A. trip; Clad was to collect the half of the money for which he had already served ten years in prison.

Johnny Rivers had seen Faye Welles one more time before they left. In a bold, albeit foolish move, he had gone to the window of her bedroom at night and wakened her. With her father sleeping only yards away, he had spoken again of his plans and asked for definite assurance that she would go with him. Faye had given him that assurance in the form of a passionate farewell kiss and a promise to leave with him when he returned for her.

Harry Stretz by now had solved his problem of how to pass the physical examination for his cab driver's job. He had done it simply but effectively by having his friend, the bartender at the Fox Club, take the examination for him. The bartender was a few years younger than Harry, but a little grey hair dye had fixed that. Harry had been driving his cab for nearly a week; he was amazed to find that he actually was earning a decent wage at it.

Clad and Johnny Rivers arrived in L.A. on Saturday and checked into a motel. The next

day Clad called Nicky Lamont and made arrangements to inspect the garage and the truck; he called Litti and arranged to see the rented store; he called Stretz to verify that he was working for the cab company and to set up a final meeting with him. At the respective meetings, Clad gave the men their synchronized watches, along with specific winding instructions to assure that they would remain synchronized. He also went over in minute detail every step of the various roles each would play in the job.

When he was completely satisfied that all was perfectly coordinated, he named the following Tuesday as the day for the action . . .

RALPH NASH told Martin Bowser, "I think they'll probably hit Tuesday. It's the day before payday for the county employees. The treasurer's office will be loaded with money to cash their paychecks. Plus which, it's the day Clad has that train reservation back to Albuquerque. He's due to leave at one o'clock. I'd say they'll probably dump the place right around noon."

Bowser nodded thoughtfully. "You say Clad has another man with him now?"

"Yeah. I followed Litti to a meet with Clad yesterday.

Clad's wearing a mustache now and his hair is longer. After the meet, I dropped Litti and followed Clad; he and some guy that looks like Geronimo are in a motel out near the San Bernardino freeway."

"Can you handle the hijack with an extra man involved?"

"I think so. If they get nervous, I can kill four almost as quickly as I can three."

"All right then," Bowser said, "let's make our plans for Tuesday. Let's say you get the money back here early Tuesday afternoon; I'll exchange it for negotiables at several banks; I'll also arrange for some fake passports and get seats on an evening flight for Argentina. How does that sound?"

"Sounds good, counselor," Nash smiled. Almost too good, he thought. For some reason he did not like the pat tone of Bowser's voice. There was something missing, some element that should have been there but was not. Sincerity, Nash thought. Maybe that's what it was.

"We're all set, then?" Bowser asked.

"Sure, counselor," Nash answered, "we're all set."

At seven-thirty on Tuesday morning, John Deep Rivers left the motel in the Buick he and Clad had driven from New Mexico. In the waistband of his

trousers was a fully loaded .45 automatic. It took him fifty-five minutes to drive to Glendale Boulevard just south of Alvarado Street. He parked at the curb, put the ignition and trunk keys behind the sun visor, rolled up the windows and left the car. Moments later, he was on a city bus heading downtown.

Five minutes later, Gino Litti parked his own car down that same block and walked back to the Buick. In one hand he carried a small black box containing his barber tools. He got into the Buick, put the barber kit on the seat beside him, and drove away. A short time later he parked the Buick in front of the rented store on Sunset. Unlocking the front door, he put his barber tools inside on the floor, then went back to the car. From the trunk he removed a folding chair, six locked suitcases, and complete changes of clothes for two men.

After putting those articles in the store, Gino locked up and drove away again in the car. At exactly ten o'clock he left the Buick, keys again behind the visor, in the 200-block of south Avenue 52. A few minutes later he boarded a bus to go back to the store he had left less than an hour earlier.

Harry Stretz at that moment was beginning his third hour of

work as driver of Blue Cab number 3313. He had less than an hour to go before he would stop picking up legitimate fares and begin his role in the robbery plan. To kill the remainder of the time, he parked his cab and went into a cafe for a cup of coffee.

Nicky Lamont's friend Lenny was worried that morning as he, too, sat over a cup of coffee in a small drug store on Whittier Boulevard. Lenny wasn't at all sure that he would have the nerve to go through with his part of the plan. It was such a simple job, too; just drive onto the parking lot next to the Hall of Records at a specific time and ram one of the parked cars to distract the guard. Nothing to it, really. And for doing it he would get five thousand dollars—and Laura Lamont.

He glanced at the chronograph wristwatch Nick had given him, and saw that it was almost time to leave. He'd force himself to go through with it, he supposed; not so much for the money, but for Laura. She would go wherever Nick went, and if he wanted to go with them he would have to do as Nick wanted him to do. He really did not have any choice, feeling as he did about Laura Lamont.

Nick himself was not nervous at all that morning. He was

ready; no qualms, no reservations. This was what he had waited for. At eight-twenty, after his stepfather had gone to work, he went into Laura's room and woke her up. He told her to stay in the house all day, that he and Lenny would pick her up sometime in the afternoon; this was the day they would all run away together. When he was sure that Laura understood, he let her go back to sleep and left the house. Twenty minutes later, he arrived at the rented garage.

Robby Clad was there waiting for him . . .

Just before nine o'clock Ralph Nash was outside the door of Martin Bowser's office, waiting for the lawyer to get there. Nash had been thinking about the extra man, the Indian that had come back with Clad; he was concerned about hijacking four men instead of three. Late the previous evening he had decided he needed an extra gun, just for insurance. Bowser, he knew, had a .32 in the office that he could borrow.

While Nash was waiting, a young man in a messenger's uniform came down the hall carrying a blue envelope in one hand. He tried Bowser's door and found it locked.

"Not here yet," said Nash. "What's that you've got?"

"Airline ticket for Mr. Mar-



tin Bowser," the messenger told him. "C.O.D."

Nash's brain clicked into alertness. "I'll take it for him," he said, reaching for his wallet. He paid for the ticket and waited until the messenger had left before taking out a switchblade and slicing open the envelope.

His face hardened as he examined the contents. There was just one ticket. One way to New York. Leaving at five o'clock that afternoon.

Nash put the ticket in his pocket and closed the knife. Five minutes later Martin Bowser came down the hall.

"Ralph," the lawyer frowned, "what are you doing here? You should be—"

"I know," Nash interrupted, "but I ran into a little problem.

Come on, open the office and I'll tell you all about it."

Bowser fumbled with his keys and opened the door. As he stepped inside, he felt a red hot pain cut into the side of his neck. He choked and stumbled forward, clutching his throat. Turning around, he dropped to his knees as a fountain of blood 'spewed down the front of his clothes. Looking up, he saw Ralph Nash standing with his back to the closed door, delicately wiping the blade of a knife with a handkerchief.

"Here's your ticket to New York, counselor," Nash said, tossing the blue envelope on the carpet. Bowser pitched forward across the envelope, soaking it with blood.

It took the lawyer less than a minute to bleed to death.

BY ELEVEN-THIRTY all the principal players in the robbery were in place. Gino Litti was back in the rented store on Sunset. Harry Stretz was driving his cab leisurely toward the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, eight miles away. Nick Lamont's friend Lenny was driving his old jalopy along Brooklyn Avenue toward the Civic Center. Nick, along with Robby Clad, was in the grey truck turning into Spring Street just north of the Hall of Records. The truck had counterfeit coun-

ty seals on both doors, and stolen municipal license plates front and rear. In the back of the truck was the toolbox containing the submachine gun and a potassium smoke bomb. Clad and Johnny Rivers had made the previous evening.

The truck halted in a loading zone next to the Hall of Records and Clad got out, taking the toolbox with him. He was wearing grey twill trousers and shirt, the unofficial uniform of county laborers. Nicky, also wearing grey work clothes, pulled away in the truck. He would return in exactly fourteen minutes, at the precise time Lenny would be ramming a car on the adjacent parking lot.

As Clad entered the building from one side, Johnny Rivers entered from the other. Johnny followed the diagram etched in his mind and walked directly to the mail room. The lunch hour was then five minutes old, and the room was deserted. Johnny took a mail cart with two empty and two full canvas bags attached to it. He pushed it down the hall to the elevator.

"Three," he told the operator.

When Johnny pushed the mail cart into the treasurer's suite, he saw Clad tightening door hinges with a screwdriver. Johnny went past the guard just



inside the entrance and proceeded toward the buzzer-controlled door that led to offices behind the tellers' cages. As Johnny passed him, Clad picked up the toolbox and followed him. The guard paid little attention to either of them; it was obvious to him that they were both county employees.

Johnny stopped at the buzzer door and knocked. A man walked toward the door from the inside. Stopping at a desk, he pressed the buzzer control. Johnny pushed the cart through the door.

"What's the idea bringing mail during lunchtime?" the man wanted to know.

As he spoke, Clad stepped through the door behind Johnny. In a split second Johnny closed and locked the door and Clad whipped the Thompson out of the toolbox.

"Stick-up," Clad announced calmly. "Stay still and keep quiet."

Johnny drew his .45 and quickly collected three men and a woman from the adjoining office. One of the men looked indignantly at Clad.

"What the hell do you think you're doing—"

"Shut up!" Clad snarled. He aimed the machine gun at the man's stomach. "I'm going to shoot at the next sound I hear," he threatened coldly. An im-

mediate silence captured the room. "Okay," Clad said to Johnny, "you've got six minutes. Go to it!"

Johnny dragged the mail cart through the other office and up to the big open vault. Unhooking one of the empty mail sacks, he stepped inside the cool steel crevice. The money was all bundled, stacked up neatly row after row, shelf upon shelf. Johnny wasted fifteen precious seconds just staring at it, his mouth agape. He muttered an oath in Apache. Then the spell broke and he began filling the mail sack.

The first one filled quickly. Johnny dragged it out, hooked it in place, and took another one in. Then a third, dumping the mail all over the floor. His face dripped and his hands were slick with sweat as he packed the money tightly, jamming it down with his foot to get as much in as possible. Finally all four sacks were loaded and ready. He pushed the cart back to where Clad held the employees at gunpoint. From the toolbox at Clad's feet, he took out the smoke bomb and put it next to the hall door.

"All set," he told Clad.

"Go," Clad said.

Johnny wiped his face and hands on a handkerchief, took a deep breath, and pushed the cart out into the hall. Walking

easily, he passed the guard and pushed through the double doors into the elevator foyer. He pushed the *down* button.

In the treasurer's office, Clad made the prisoners lie down on the floor. He put the Thompson back into the toolbox and drew his .45. When a full two minutes had passed, he lifted his foot and stepped down on the plunger of the smoke bomb. Then he backed through the door and closed it behind him.

In the foyer the elevator door opened and Johnny pushed the cart aboard. He slipped his gun out and held it at his side, letting the operator see it.

"Keep the car right here and the door open," he said evenly.

Clad waited until a trail of black smoke began to seep from under the door he had just closed; then he ran wildly down the hall toward the guard.

"Fire!" he yelled at the guard. "The building is on fire!"

The guard stared incredulously at Clad for a moment, then instinctively hurried toward the smoking door. As he did so, Clad darted into the foyer and aboard the waiting elevator.

"Close the door," Johnny Rivers said to the operator. "Take it straight down to the basement, express."

Clad and Johnny were waiting with the cart just inside the loading zone ramp when Nicky Lamont pulled up in the truck. Fifty yards, south, Lenny turned his jalopy into the parking lot entrance. Lenny's eyes, which should have been on his driving, were fixed anxiously on the nearby truck with Nick Lamont behind the wheel. Lenny did not see the county car pulling out of the lot as he attempted to pull in. He did not even know what happened in the fleeting instant that the two vehicles crashed head-on and he was thrown forward, his head smashing through the windshield.

Nick Lamont stared as though hypnotized at his friend's bloody head protruding through the jagged glass. He was completely unaware of the two men behind him until the mail sacks had been thrown aboard and Clad was yelling "Get going, move!"

Still Nick sat there, petrified, hands frozen on the steering wheel. From somewhere a siren cut the air. Then another. Clad jammed the muzzle of his .45 against Lamont's neck.

"Move or I'll blow your head off!" he ordered.

Nick snapped back to reality. He wet his lips and shifted into low gear. The truck moved away from the curb.

Six minutes later, the truck pulled up behind the rented store. Gino Litti held open the back door while Clad and Johnny moved the sacks inside. Then Clad unlocked one of the suitcases Gino had brought in earlier, removed two manila envelopes and handed them through the truck window to Lamont.

"One for you, one for your friend if he's still alive," Clad said. "Clear out."

Nick shifted gears and moved the truck down the alley.

In the store, Johnny Rivers began transferring money from the sacks into suitcases. Clad sat in the folding chair and had his mustache shaved off and was given a crew cut by Gino Litti. When Gino finished with Clad, he worked on Johnny Rivers. In a matter of minutes, the appearances of both men had changed radically. Both of them changed clothes and moved the six money-filled suitcases over next to the door. Clad gave Gino a manila envelope containing the balance of his fee.

"Okay, my friend, that's it. As soon as Johnny leaves, you're on your own."

Clad walked over to the front door and checked his watch. Twenty seconds to go. He handed the last manila envelope to Johnny. "Pay off the

cab driver when he drops you."

"Right," the Indian nodded.

"See you Saturday in Mexico City."

Rivers grinned. "I'll be there."

Clad opened the front door just as Harry Stretz pulled his cab to the curb and stopped.

AT THE Hall of Records, eleven fire engines were converged around the building. Traffic was snarled for a radius of two miles. Air hoses had blown out all the heavy smoke from Clad's bomb. The havoc was beginning to subside. It took nearly forty minutes for officials to discover that a robbery had taken place.

The first radio call to go out ordered all outbound freeway ramps closed. Special details were dispatched to air, bus and rail terminals. All private planes were grounded. As quickly as possible, all modes of escape were being sealed in an attempt to trap the holdup men before they could get out of the area.

At the Hall of Records parking lot, Nick Lamont's friend Lenny was removed from his wrecked jalopy and rushed to the hospital. He died on the way, exactly one hour and one minute after he had started the turn into the lot.

Nick Lamont, at that moment, was walking down Color-

ado Avenue in Pasadena, after having abandoned the truck several blocks away. He walked as if in a stupor, his mind filled with the vivid memory of Len-ny's head going through the windshield. Nick felt suddenly very tired; he wanted to sit down someplace and rest. Ahead of him he saw a movie theater. Listlessly he bought a ticket and went inside. Moments later, still clutching the two manila envelopes, he submerged himself in the darkness of the theater and fell asleep.

Ralph Nash, just then, was sitting in Union Station watching passenger gate eleven, through which Clad would have to pass to board his train. Nash knew that the robbery had been a success; he had watched from a doorway half a block down the alley while Clad and the Indian had unloaded the truck. It was then that he had decided against hijacking the entire group. He had no way of knowing how many more men might be inside; Yargo, the photographer, for instance, was nowhere to be seen.

So instead of hitting them all together, he would hit Clad alone on the train to Albuquerque. Clad would have the lion's share of the loot anyway; his own cut, plus Danker's. So Nash had come to the station and bought a ticket in the chair

car on the one o'clock train. Now he waited hopefully for Clad to evade the police net and make the train.

Outside the terminal, four uniformed policemen in a patrol car listened to the first radio bulletin giving descriptions of the two holdup men. One was a white male American, about thirty-five, in need of a haircut, wearing a mustache. The other was described as a male Mexican, about thirty, well-built, with long sideburns.

While the officers were listening to the call, Harry Stretz pulled his cab up and halted in the taxi zone directly in front of the radio car. The officers watched with interest as Stretz unloaded four suitcases for his passenger. One of the policemen got out and walked over to him.

"Where'd you pick up this fare, mac?" he asked Stretz.

"Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel," said Stretz. "Why? Anything wrong?"

"Lot of luggage for one man, isn't it?" the officer said pointedly.

"He's a salesman," Stretz shrugged. "Those are sample cases. We get 'em all the time."

"Where'd you say you picked him up?"

"Hollywood Roosevelt."

The policeman looked in at the cab's meter. It read nearly

four dollars. That was about the right fare from the Hollywood Roosevelt, he guessed. He glanced over at the passenger, who was telling a porter where to take his bags. The passenger was clean-cut, had a short hair-cut, no mustache, dressed in a neat business suit, he looked nothing like the description of the holdup men.

"Okay," the policeman said. He returned to the radio car.

The passenger, Robby Clad, handed Stretz a five dollar bill. "Keep the change," he said. He followed his luggage into the terminal.

Six minutes later, Harry Stretz came to a stop in front of the rented store again. Johnny Rivers emerged from the store, threw two suitcases onto the rear seat and climbed in after them. Stretz pulled away and drove over to Flower Street, then cut down the on-ramp of the Pasadena Freeway. Two minutes later, a patrol car from the sheriff's Department swung sideways across that very ramp, blocking all outgoing traffic. That was the last ramp to be closed. The Civic Center was then completely blockaded.

Johnny left the cab at the intersection of Avenue 52 and Echo Street. He gave Stretz the manila envelope containing the balance of his fee, and the taxi pulled away. Johnny picked up

his luggage and walked around the corner to where Gino Litti had left the Buick. It was fifteen minutes past one when he headed the car east on Route 66.

Back at the rented store, Gino Litti spent ten minutes wiping away any possible fingerprints from anything he might have touched. When that was done, he put his money into his barber kit and left the store. He walked idly down toward Figueroa. Off in the distance he heard the wail of more sirens. They reminded him of a time back in Stateville penitentiary in Illinois when Roger Touhy had led a brazen daylight break over the walls. What a day that had been, Gino mused.

He stepped off the curb to cross the street, recalling all the sirens that had sounded at Stateville that day. He could still hear them in his mind, loud, screeching—Gino was just steps from the curb when a siren he thought was only in his mind descended upon him in the form of a speeding radio car. It struck him broadside and hurled him sixty feet into a fire hydrant. The two officers in the car grinded to a halt and ran over to him. Miraculously, Gino Litti was still alive.

Harry Stretz drove his taxi into the Blue Cab company

garage at two o'clock. The strain of the day was beginning to tell on Harry now; a tightness had developed in his chest and his throat felt as if it had expanded to twice its normal size. He sat back in the seat for a few moments, resting and forcing himself to take regular breaths. Everything will be okay now, he thought. He would go into the hospital at once and have his pump fixed up. The money he had earned today would pay for the operation and carry him for a long time after that.

Harry took a final deep breath and turned slightly to get out of the cab. His left hand would not move. Harry looked dumbly at it. Maybe if I rest for awhile, he thought. He leaned forward and laid his head against the steering wheel. He closed his eyes, and never opened them again. Harry's afflicted heart stopped beating at five minutes past two.

Nick Lamont did not get home until six o'clock; he had slept away the afternoon in the Pasadena theater. His stepfather, Owen Simon, was reading the paper when Nick walked in. Simon glanced up at him, noticing the grey twills Nick wore, the two bulky manila envelopes he carried. Nick went directly to his bedroom and closed the door. A few minutes

later he emerged, dressed in the only suit he owned, and went down the hall to Laura's room.

Owen waited until Laura's door had closed behind his stepson, then got up and went into Nick's room. He found the two envelopes in a top bureau drawer. Looking at all the money, Owen-Simon smiled. Now the little punk has done it, he thought. He hurried into the hall and quietly called the sheriff's Department.

BY THE TIME darkness fell in Los Angeles, at eight o'clock, some of the pieces were beginning to fall into place for the hundreds of lawmen working on the case.

At General Hospital, Gino Litti lay in a private room staring at the ceiling. His spine was hopelessly broken and he was paralyzed from the neck down. Finding ten thousand dollars in his barber kit had prompted the police to fingerprint him; it would only be a matter of time before his F.B.I. record was uncovered.

The getaway truck had been found in Pasadena. A check with the Department of Motor Vehicles had turned up the address of the East Los Angeles garage Nick Lamont had rented.

The family of Nick's friend Lenny had been contacted by detectives. They obtained a list

of all Lenny's known friends. Near the top of that list was Nick Lamont.

A routine death report on a cab driver named Harry Stretz had been filtered into the detective bureau because a manila envelope full of money had been found in the cab with the dead man. Stretz was photographed and fingerprinted at the County Morgue.

And, most importantly, Nick Lamont, on his stepfather's complaint, had been picked up and taken to an interrogation room at the jail. Nick refused to talk to anyone except George Groves, his former juvenile probation officer. When Groves was produced, Nick agreed to give them all the information he had about the holdup in exchange for one favor: he wanted his sister Laura removed at once from Owen Simon's home.

Groves accommodated Nick with an order to have Laura Lamont taken into custody and lodged in a juvenile home. Although Nick did not know it, Laura would have been removed from Simon's guardianship in any event, since she was not a blood relative to Simon and Nick obviously would no longer be a member of the household.

Nick, satisfied that his sister was safe from the lustful eyes

of their stepfather, kept his part of the bargain and divulged all he knew about the robbery.

An hour after Nick gave his statement, a flying squad swarmed over Mitch Yargo's studio and took the photographer into custody. Another team of men converged on the rented store and recovered the empty mail sacks and some freshly cut hair. Still another riot squad battered down front and rear doors at Lippy the Gun's novelty shop. They found enough stolen, unregistered and sawed-off weapons to put Lippy in a federal prison for many years.

And last but not least, a complete rundown on Robby Clad had been teletyped to Los Angeles from the F.B.I. and an emergency bulletin on him had gone out to all law enforcement agencies in the twelve western states.

At one o'clock in the morning, less than fourteen hours after the robbery, the only one about whom the police still knew nothing was Johnny Deep Rivers.

It was an hour before dawn when Johnny guided the dusty Buick past the city limits of Albuquerque. He had been behind the wheel for nearly fifteen hours and had covered eight hundred and fifty miles. Almost there, he told himself



now, ignoring the numbing aches and stiffness of his body. and shook her head sadly. A tear rolled down one of her cheeks.

He went through town and drove out to the private road leading to the Welles ranch. Cutting the headlights, he drove as close to the main house as he dared, then removed his shoes and went the rest of the way on foot.

Standing outside her window, Johnny could see Faye's sleeping form on the bed, bathed in silvery moonlight. He quietly removed the screen and put his head through the window. As he started to climb into the house, he sensed a movement very close to him. He froze momentarily, then jerked himself back outside and turned toward the movement—

The shotgun blast ripped apart the body and life of Johnny Deep Rivers.

Faye Welles hurried to the window, her face pale with fright. She saw her father standing there in the moonlight with a smoking shotgun.

"What is it, daddy? Did you get a coyote?"

The old man grunted softly. "Yeah. A two-legged coyote. Damned prowling Indian."

Faye's mouth dropped open in shock. He did come back, she thought incredulously. He hadn't been making it all up, after all. She looked down at the still body on the ground

In his compartment on the speeding streamliner, Robby Clad had spent half the night counting money. He had counted money until his hands were black from the handling of it. A nightmare of money, that's what it had been for him. But now it was over. In just a few minutes the train would arrive in Albuquerque. Lee would be waiting with a new car. Then it was on to El Paso for them. El Paso—and the Mexican border.

He looked at the sheets of paper he had used to tally the money. His eyes followed the many columns of figures down to a total. He read the total aloud.

"Two million, three hundred twelve thousand, eight hundred dollars."

Clad grinned and hummed softly to himself as he began collecting his things and getting ready to leave the train. He was about to shut the last suitcase when there was a knock at the compartment door.

"Porter, sir," he heard a voice from beyond the door.

Clad put down the lid of the suitcase to cover the money and the submachine gun. He snapped back the lock on the door.

As Clad did so, Ralph Nash



kicked his way into the compartment.

"Don't even think about moving, friend," Nash said easily, leveling his Magnum on Clad.

"What do you want?" Clad said tightly.

Nash grinned. "You know what I want. The only thing you've got to decide is whether I leave you alive and empty-handed, or face down in your own blood. You've got about one minute to make up your mind."

Clad's face turned grim. Not now, he thought. Not right at the finish line. Not after all he'd been through.

He felt the .45 lying heavily under his belt, hidden by his coat. If he could move fast enough—

Clad tried it and found out he was not nearly quick enough. Nash triggered his Magnum with a feather touch and shot Clad low in the stomach. Clad pitched backwards onto the berth. He lay still.

Nash quickly unlocked the door and picked up the two nearest suitcases. The train was grinding to a stop outside the Albuquerque depot as he moved along the passage and put the bags in the vestibule. He hurried back to the compartment for the other two suitcases. Clad was lying face down

on the bunk as Nash quickly snatched up the two remaining bags and turned to leave. Then, before he could get back through the door, there was a staccato burst of gunfire and twelve slugs ripped into him from behind, breaking his back and literally tearing his insides to pieces.

Ralph Nash died quickly, but not so quickly that he did not get a brief look at his killer. The last thing his sight focused on was a bleeding Robby Clad propped up on the berth holding a smoking Thompson in his hands. Nash grinned as he slid down the wall, down to the floor, and on down to the deepest place a man can go.

Clad felt the train begin to move again. He struggled to his feet and stumbled over to the window. The fire in his gut was spreading out in all directions, engulfing him. Darkness was beginning to cloud his eyes. But he did get to see what he wanted to see.

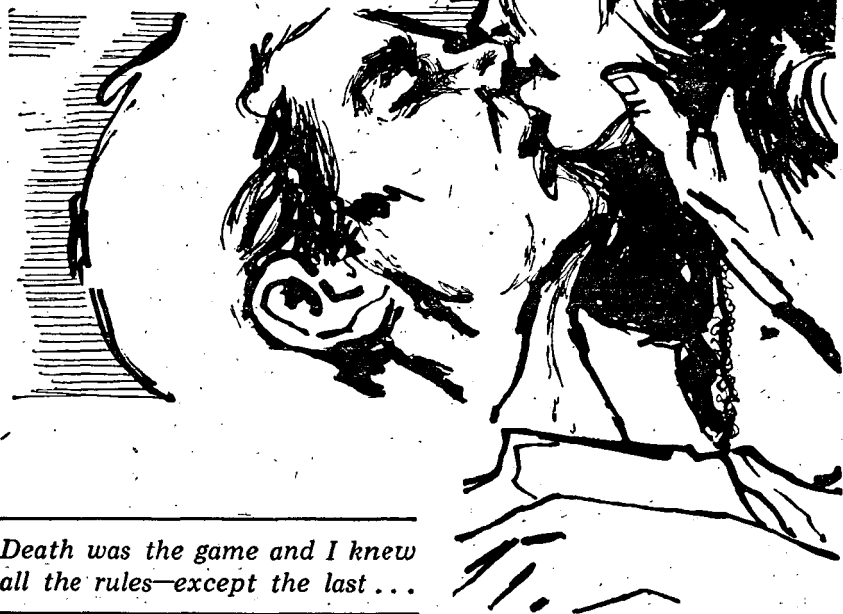
Through the window, there was Lee. Wearing a white dress, black hair upswept, her Indian body lithe and proud, but her head downcast in sadness as she walked slowly away from the empty platform.

Then the train passed her and Lee was gone from him. And he closed his eyes and life was gone from him.

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# LATE, LATE CALL

by  
GEORGE ANTONICH



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*Death was the game and I knew  
all the rules—except the last . . .*

---

THE TELEPHONE screamed. I came out of my nightmare muttering obscenities. I peered at the bedside clock. Two minutes past midnight. I wondered vaguely why the lamp was still on. The bedroom reeked of stale bourbon. My mouth tasted like the bottom of an alligator pit. On the phone a voice I hadn't heard for a long, painful time said:

"Mike? Is that you? This is Cindy. Cindy Tasman."

Her words splashed over me like a pail of chilling ice water. At the first syllable from that low-pitched, heavily sensual voice, my entire body throbbled instantly awake as if touched by an electric prod.

"Mike? Don't you remember me?"

*Remember?* Could I ever forget the woman I'd killed two years before?

"Mike?"

I heard my own thinly drawn breath. I said, "Cindy—" as if my throat had suddenly rusted.

"It's really me, Mike. Are you all right? You sound so strange."

The once-familiar voice stirred up a boiling cauldron of memories I'd fought for two bourbon-soaked years to forget. In the past six months, with Debra's tender loving help, I'd almost succeeded in moving Cindy to the back burner of my mind. Until now. Until the raucous ringing of the telephone told me the flame had not gone out.

My fingers ached on the receiver.

"I'm all right," I said. "You woke me out of a bad dream." With my free hand I reached for the open bottle on the nightstand. I took a long

swallow and wondered why I'd mentioned the nightmare. Trying, I couldn't remember what I'd been dreaming. My head felt spun with cobwebs.

On the phone, Cindy sighed wearily. "Mike, would you rather I just hang up? You needn't talk to me if you don't want to."

"No!" It came out as a sharply cried plea. "Don't hang up. I do want to talk to you. How—how are you, Cindy?"

"I'm fine, Mike. Just fine." She paused briefly. "Look, I don't want to bother you. If you'd rather not talk to me, I'll understand."

I took another deep gulp from the bottle. She was apologizing to me! It didn't make sense.

Quickly, I said, "Don't hang up on me, Cindy. Just give me a moment or two to collect my wits."

I put down the receiver and fumbled for a cigarette. Thumb- ing the lighter, my right hand ached. I looked at it. The middle knuckle was slightly split. Around it, purplish blotches were beginning to form. I moaned, wondering what I'd stumbled into this time. After each wobble-kneed bender the cost of repairs to my bachelor apartment grew. I shook my head. There would be plenty of time to think about

that later. Right now, I must concentrate on Cindy.

The image of her was bright and burning through my mind. The old consuming desire almost blotted out what I'd done to her—or what I thought I'd done to her. Was it only two years before? Slightly more. I'd met her that summer. I was twenty-four and working in a picturesque North Beach bar. She had come to San Francisco to visit a relative. At the end of a week I was so out of my head in love with her I was actually pricing wedding bands. Over the bar, I'd made an elaborate ceremony of tearing up my little black book to prove my sincerity.

Cindy! A tall girl with extra-bright copper-colored hair that was long and stimulating to the touch. Everything about her was extra-special. She had almond-shaped green eyes and a wide, soft mouth with lips that were a deep rose red without makeup. She'd dressed in thigh-high miniskirts and turquoise turtlenecks that hot summer. And when I held her in my arms it was as if I'd died and gone to a very special heaven all my own.

And then, abruptly, it had all come to a screeching halt. We'd planned a weekend together, a drive down the coast to Santa Barbara. It had been

the most perfect thing in my life. Until Sunday night. Sunday night, Cindy told me she was leaving me.

I couldn't believe my ears. "What did I do wrong?"

She'd taken a deep breath and reached out for my hand. "You did everything right, darling. But this is the end of the line. When I met you I was already engaged to be married. I should have told you about Terry, but I didn't want to lose you. I thought I'd have this one last fling before settling down. But it got out of hand, darling. I'm getting much too serious about you."

"Forget Terry," I pleaded. "I love you. I want to marry you."

"I know," she said. "But I just can't see a life of scrimping, trying to make it on your bartender's salary. With Terry I'll have everything I've ever wanted."

"You can't do this to me," I moaned. "I can't live without you."

"You can," she said. "You will. Time will help. In a few weeks you'll have trouble trying to remember what I look like. Your male ego is bruised, Mike. You're not a very good loser."

"I should be," I laughed thinly. "I've been a loser all my life. But you're right, I've never learned to accept rejection

gracefully." I forgot everything then, my pride, my independence, my manhood. I groveled and begged her not to leave.

Then Cindy drew away from me. "This is disgusting, Mike. You're acting like a sulky little boy who can't have his own way."

I hit her then. Just one blow. A short right cross to her lovely chin. She crumpled like a rag doll. Without a sound. I paced the hotel room, bottle in hand for comfort, waiting for her to revive. But she didn't. I panicked then. I didn't rant or rave or fall apart. Instead, very methodically, as if I'd rehearsed it, I went into the bathroom. I filled the tub. Then I carried Cindy's limp body into the tiled room and lowered her into the water.

I fell on my knees beside the tub. Crazily, I hoped the cold water might bring her around. The gurgling, pleading sounds that came up from my throat brought no response. Cindy's eyes remained closed. Her body began to sag. It slid slowly, slowly, down in the tub. Before her head went under, I ran.

I'd been running for two years. After a time I stopped searching the out of town papers for some account of her death. After a time I stopped flinching whenever someone laid a hand on my shoulder.

After a time, with Debra's help, I'd almost succeeded in forgetting—until the ringing telephone brought it all back into mind-boggling focus.

Grimly now, I ground out the cigarette butt and picked up the receiver. I said, "Cindy—are you still there?"

"Yes, darling, I'm here."

"About that night in Santa Barbara," I began. "I'm sorry, Cindy. I'm so very sorry."

"Stop putting all the blame on yourself," she said. "I certainly can't fault you for leaving me there alone. I had it coming, Mike. I did treat you very badly."

"It's all so fuzzy in my mind," I said. "I—I can't seem to put it all together."

Cindy laughed. "No wonder, darling. We were both very drunk. I remember telling you about Terry, then the lights went out for me. That must have been when you left. Apparently I tried to sober up with a cold bath. I must have slipped. At any rate, I came to in the tub, with a sore jaw and half drowned. But that's all in the past, darling. Don't you want to know why I called you?"

Relief flooded over me like a sudden spring rain. I made some weird, mewling sounds into the receiver.

"Terry is dead," Cindy told



me. "His private plane crashed on our Palm Springs ranch. Mike, darling, I'm a rich widow!"

Stunned, all I could say was, "Oh?"

"Not just rich, darling—not even merely wealthy, but stinking, filthy rich! Everything Terry owned is mine now—and yours." Her voice broke off.

"That is, unless you're one of those foolish men who object to marrying money."

Giddy with relief, I said, "That foolish I am not! All my life I've dreamed of finding a wealthy, sexy widow with a liquor store."

Cindy said with childlike glee, "I qualify on all counts. But it's not just one liquor store, darling. It's six. Six liquor stores, three bars in Palm Springs, an apartment house and two motels. How does that grab you?"

I let out a hissing *whoosh* of appreciation. "That sounds just great," I said. Then, a sudden, haunting vision of Debra flashed through my mind. After what she'd done for me, how could I let her down? Into the phone, I said, "There's something you should know, Cindy. I—I've become pretty involved with someone. A wonderful girl."

Cindy said, "Debra Parson?"

I nodded dumbly. "After that night in Santa Barbara I went on a monumental bender. I didn't draw a sober breath for a year and a half. It's all pretty fuzzy, but I remember meeting her when I was broke and sick. She took me in hand and tried to straighten me out."

"I know," Cindy said. "Debra Parson. Age, twenty-three. Occupation, part time

social worker and habitual do-gooder. She bailed you out of the drunk tank and made you her pet project for salvation. As I understand it, she even tried a bit of extra curricular loving care to keep you on the straight and narrow."

My mouth dropped open. "How could you possibly know all that?"

"It's simple, Mike. I've had you followed and watched for over three months, since Terry died."

"You had me followed? But why?"

Cindy laughed. "People do change in two years. Before I could bring myself to share all that lovely community property with you, I had to know what sort of a person you'd become."

"I'm afraid I haven't changed much," I said, then sighed. "I'm still a loser, Cindy."

"I don't understand."

"I mean, now, with you back, with everything I've ever wanted within my grasp, I'm in no position to accept."

"Because of Debra?"

"She's been wonderful to me, Cindy. I could never let her down. Don't you see? Of all people, I know just how devastating rejection can be."

"Mike, you are a fool!"

I took a slow, deliberate breath.

"Maybe so," I said. "But for the first time in two years I feel a small measure of peace. My bouts with the bottle are becoming fewer and farther between. I've got a part time job, and a woman who knows the meaning of love and selflessness for a man."

"Then you don't know?" Cindy asked, her voice rising. "Obviously, she hasn't told you yet?"

"Told me what? What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about Royce Cargill, the man she's going to marry."

It was my turn to laugh. Crazily, the sound that came from my lips was more of a strangled gasp. "You're out of your mind," I said. "Debra is completely devoted to me. We had dinner earlier and she never mentioned another man." Even as I spoke the words, a slight glimmer of recognition teased the corners of my mind. *Where had I heard that name?*

"Royce Cargill," Cindy cut in, as if reading my thoughts, "is a young law student, about to graduate from Stanford. He and Debra have been sweethearts since childhood. At two o'clock this afternoon they took out a marriage license. In three days they'll be man and



wife. And where does that leave you?"

Where did it leave me? It took a long moment for the full impact to hit me. "Do you know what this means?" I cried. "It means I'm free of her! What I thought was love was only my blind dependence on her—she was my crutch. Now I don't have to worry about letting her down. It means that you and I can do everything we've ever dreamed of."

"Are you sure, Mike? Have you matured enough to take a jolt like this?"

"I have," I assured her. "I know I have. Where are you now, Cindy? I want to see you. I must see you. We have so many plans to make."

"I'm at the Fairmont, darling. I can be at your place in ten minutes."

"Make it fifteen," I said. "Give me time to clean up, to put my head on straight."

I cradled the receiver and stretched out on the bed for a full minute, savoring the pure, unadulterated joy of it. Cindy and I together again, for the rest of our lives. It was too much! I reached out for the bottle on the nightstand. Then I

changed my mind. I wouldn't be needing that again. As I replaced the bottle I noticed the middle knuckle of my right hand. The wound had opened. I tried to remember if there were bandages in the medicine cabinet. I got out of bed, my knees wobbling shakily.

I looked around the room. It was a cluttered mess. My dresser was at a drunken angle, as if I'd stumbled into it—again. The portable TV lay on the floor beside an overturned table. I groaned. I'd have to hurry to get everything put right before Cindy arrived. But first things first. Right now I needed a bandage for my hand. I went into the bathroom.

And wished I hadn't. A sharp cry of shock and revulsion tore out of my throat. Debra's limp body lay in the water-filled tub. Her sightless eyes were fixed accusingly on me.

Abruptly, I remembered where and when I had heard the name, Royce Cargill. And I knew, too, that the late, late telephone call had not brought me out of a bad dream.

My nightmare had only now begun.

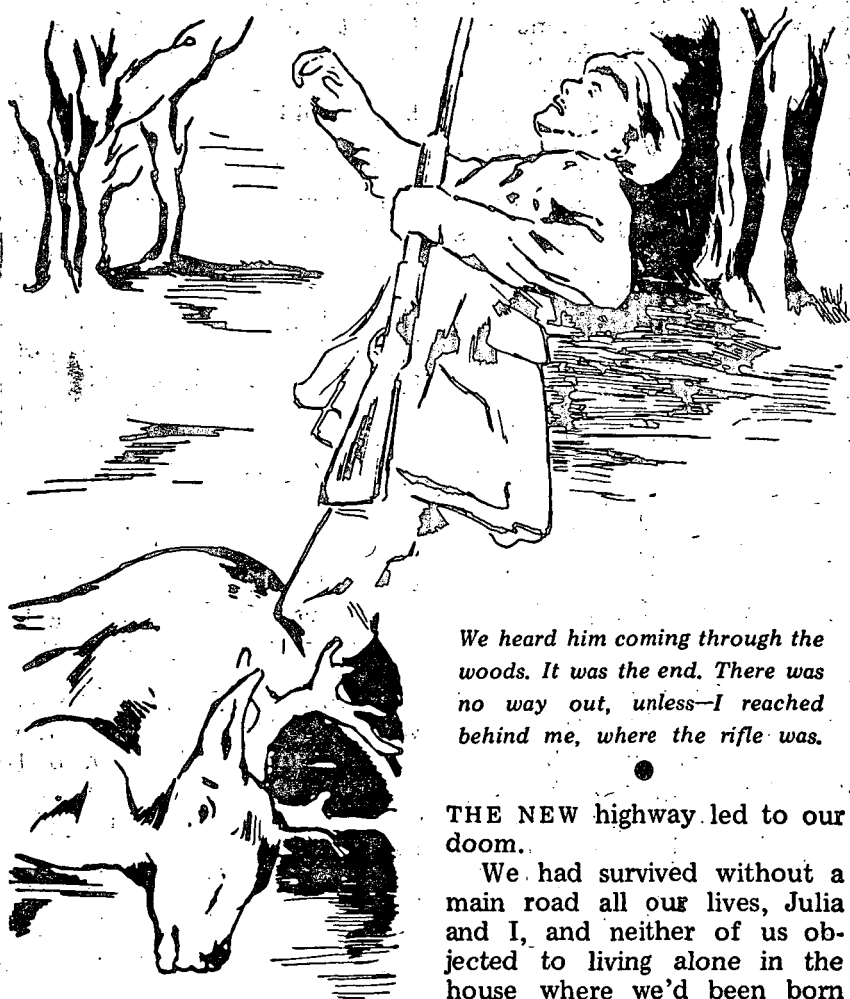
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THE ONLY MAGAZINE featuring MIKE SHAYNE every month

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# THE TRESPASSERS

by A. L. RADBILL



*We heard him coming through the woods. It was the end. There was no way out, unless—I reached behind me, where the rifle was.*

THE NEW highway led to our doom.

We had survived without a main road all our lives, Julia and I, and neither of us objected to living alone in the house where we'd been born

and raised ten miles from our nearest neighbor. The posted four-hundred acres were our woods and ponds, our fields and our garden, as they had been for more than fifty years, since father died in the shooting accident.

We hated that highway. With the wind blowing from the east, we could hear the trucks screaming past a mile from our door. It was from the east, too, that the hunters came, killing, killing.

They couldn't shoot correctly, most of them. We'd find the animals mutilated, bleeding, dragging themselves into dense woods to die. And the red-vested men with their high-powered rifles and shotguns would chase after the dying creatures and pull them out and tie them up and sling them across their cars.

Julia and I were vegetarians, although we'd never begrudge other folks their steak if they could stomach it. Cattle is raised for such purposes.

But the deer and pheasants and fox and quail, the ducks and raccoons and woodchucks and squirrels, the porcupines, skunks, rabbits, and wolves are wild, you see, and they should not be slaughtered. And they most certainly should not be slaughtered on our land. Julia always said so.

"I'm gald we sold the Hols-teins," my sister said. "And the laying hens, too, for that matter. I sometimes wonder, Emily dear, whether Princess is safe."

"No one would shoot at our dog," I said.

Princess, by human age, was going on ninety-five, thirty years more than Julia and twenty-five years older than I. We loved her, and she loved us. She was dignified, and she never whined. Except once. One brisk, cloudless Saturday morning in October, Princess crawled across our field and lay whining at our back door.

"The arthritis, poor dear," Julia said, running to help her. Princess rolled over onto her back, as she'd done since she was a puppy.

"She's bleeding," I said. "She's been shot."

Before we could help her, Princess whined again, and died. Julia began crying, quietly, the tears welling up and falling, and she made no sound.

After we'd buried our dog, Julia called the authorities. She was barely able to speak through her tears. She could not be consoled, not by me, or by young Tom Whitely, the policeman from town who came up to look for the hunter.

"No one has been punished for the murder of Princess," Julia often said, brooding, "and

that is not justice. No one cared."

"Perhaps it was an accident," I said.

"Then I would have forgiven them, if they'd told me."

"We have only ourselves, now."

Our tomcat had died the year before and we kept no other pets, but we knew the birds and the animals on our land, and we fed them and watched them, and we felt close to each one.

The wildlife needed our grain and suet and hay and seed more than ever that winter because the snows were worse than usual. Even the deer stole down to our clearing in December. We liked to see them eating.

We were at the kitchen table sipping tisanes late one afternoon and watching the deer family browse. We heard four shots.

The buck collapsed and the snow turned red around him. The deer leaped into the air, and fell to her knees. She struggled to rise, but it was the end for her, too. Only the little fawn escaped into the forest. He'd been born in the spring, and we'd watched him grown. He was like a grandchild to us spinsters.

"Emily," Julia whispered, "we are responsible for their

deaths, as though we had killed them ourselves. We allowed them to trust the scent of man."

My sister and I threw on our coats and hurried to the edge of the clearing. Neither of us saw a hunter. We heard another shot, far off, and we circled round to the rear of the house, but we found nothing. It was growing dark. We went in. We kept a vigil that night with the porch lights on, waiting for someone to claim the deer. No one came.

At dawn we dressed warmly and trudged into the woods. Not far from where the animals lay at the edge of the tree line, we saw blood in the snow. The blood trailed on and on, and we followed, deeper into the woods, till we found the footprints, and we followed them, too, until the blood trail and the human prints merged and ended in a tramped-down area around the fawn.

Julia began to cry. The young animal had been so beautiful and harmless, and in so much pain, staggering a half mile to die, senselessly, bleeding to death in a snow drift while the man watched. We could see his bootprints. He'd left the fawn there and gone away. Julia followed the prints and I followed Julia. But the windblown snow was too deep for us. We turned back.



As we struggled out of the forest we came upon the prints again. The dead buck was gone, dragged away. We could tell by the marks in the snow. The doe still lay as she'd fallen.

We rushed home and Julia picked up the phone to call the authorities and report the trespassing and the hunting and the murder of the fawn. As she was dialing, I parted the curtains, peeked out, and saw something

moving at the edge of the forest.

"Julia," I called to her, and she hung up the phone and came over to me. "Look there."

A man in a lumber jacket was creeping out of the woods toward the deer. He glanced about, failed to see us, and began to attach a rope to the dead animal.

As I stood watching, Julia turned away from the window and tiptoed out of the room.

"Tell them to hurry," I said.

I heard a shot.

The man fell across the deer.

Before I could understand what had happened, Julia walked across the threshold, carrying the rifle. She stopped at the edge of the scatter rug and looked at me. We stared at each other for a long time without speaking. Finally I faced away, toward the window again.

"You did the right thing," I said.

We spent the day hiding the man's carcass under piles of branches and twigs. It didn't matter, though, because the snow came down that night, and the next day, and the next night, and when the blizzard was over, the woods were white and silent and our secret was safe.

Later, the young policeman from town knocked on our

door. Julia explained to Tom that we'd never seen anybody, although we'd heard shots. Her answers seemed to satisfy him. He went away.

We didn't speak of it much, Julia and I. Once she said, "Do you think the body will show in the spring thaw?"

And I said, "No, we were very careful."

Another day she said, "If they do find out, we shall swear it was my fault. I forced you not to tell."

And I said, "No, we'll say it was as much my doing as yours."

"Perish the thought," she said. "You have always been a dear, sweet sister to me, and I to you. I have always protected you from strangers, and I shall continue to do so. You never fire the rifle any more, and so it is my fault alone."

"You are very good to me," I said.

Then we talked of other things, until the next time.

My sister was putting up apple butter when I called to her, "Julia, do you hear that?"

"Shotguns," she said. "Hurry."

I pulled down her rifle from its brackets over the mantel-piece and we ran outside, Julia still clutching her wooden mixing spoon. We hastened toward the noise.

A hunter was peppering our colony of water fowl, from the edge of our largest pond.

"He's slaughtering our hooded mergansers," I said. "And our wood ducks."

"Stop, stop it," Julia shouted at him.

My sister never raised her voice. Even if she wanted to yell, she was not loud, and the hunter failed to hear her above his shooting.

"Stop it, stop it," she said again. She was crying, and her words were even softer than before. He never heard her. He continued his shooting.

Julia grabbed the rifle from my hands, aimed, fired. Again. Again. Until the trigger went *click*.

"You shot very well," I said.

I walked back for the shovels. We buried the hunter, working all day and into the dusk. The earth was still soft then, and we covered the shallow grave with piles and piles of red and yellow leaves from the birch and the maples and the hickories.

When Tom Whitely came asking, she said she'd heard many shots, but never saw anything.

"Oh, c'mon Julia, you musta seen somethin'," he said.

"Tom," said my sister, "don't you dare to address me in that manner. I knew your

mother when she was in pigtails and could not do sums, and your grandmother and I attended the Normal School together. I had no idea that a youngster like you, Thomas Whitely, could be allowed to become a policeman."

"Yes, ma'am," said Whitely, and went away.

Julia was still upset.

"How dare he talk to me like that?" she said again. "I do believe he thinks I'm senile."

"They all think we're touched, don't they, Julia? All the people in town think we're touched."

"Don't let them trouble you, dear. You have me to protect you. We'll just go and do what we have to do."

And we did, later, when we came upon another hunter, a lad, really, not yet out of his teens. We found him quite by accident, leaning over a steel leg-hold trap. The muskrat was still alive, his paw nearly torn off.

The boy held a knife in his hand. His rifle rested against a pin oak.

When he heard us coming, he stood up. He seemed surprised, but not frightened, certainly. I suppose he was thinking: *two old ladies, what are they doing here?*

Julia picked up his rifle and walked right over to him. He

was saying, "Hello," as Julia shot his head off.

She placed the weapon in his hands. We had to dispatch the little muskrat. He was crazy with pain, and there was no saving him.

A week later we reported the boy's death. There are many accidents during the hunting season. The authorities ruled his death an accident, also. No one grew suspicious, and they left us alone as before.

My sister was ill that year. Her heart. I tended to her needs, but she recovered slowly, and it wasn't until the next fall that she was strong enough to take brief walks in the field. My health declined, along with hers. Arthritis. Eye trouble. Fevers. We couldn't keep a proper watch on our property as we'd done in years past.

"I haven't seen to the land lately," Julia said one Indian summer day. "Would it be all right, dear, if I went into the woods for a little? You needn't get out of bed with your fever. I shall be back by noon."

"Be careful," I said. "There may be hunters about."

"I shall take the rifle," said Julia. And she left.

She did not return by twelve. Or by one. Or two.

I dragged myself out of bed, wrapped myself in sweaters and a shawl, and went in search of



my sister. I called her name many times, and she did not answer.

As the sun began to creep down behind the tree line, I saw a glint in the woods. I walked closer and found Julia, lying on her back; the metal of the timepiece pinned to her coat was gleaming in the light of the setting sun.

"Julia, Julia," I said, and she did not answer. I kneeled beside her. Her right leg was bent, twisted at the ankle, and over her foot, the steel mechanism of a leg-hold trap.

I could not tell whether she had fainted or died.

I pulled the rifle from under her so she could lie more comfortably, covered her with my shawl, and went back to the cabin to call a doctor.

He came. And an ambulance. They took her away. She was dead. A heart attack.

I stayed at home. Tom Whitely went into the woods, later, to see how she had come to die, and to find the one who'd set the trap.

He said he would have to write a report.

Though it was dinner time, I didn't feel much like eating, so I sat at the window and looked out.

Suddenly Tom Whitely came running out of the woods. He flung open the door of his car

and grabbed his radio. He began to speak, all excited.

"I found another body out there. Male. Shot. Don't look like an accident. Couldn't be self-inflicted from the position of him. Didn't see anyone else out there. . . Sure I'm sure . . . I'm going to question her right now. If you say so. Okay, I'll bring her in. Roger."

I went outside and stood on the porch.

Tom Whitely put back his microphone in a hurry.

"Emily," he said, "I have to ask you some questions. This is a serious police matter. I'm afraid you'll have to come with me."

"What's the trouble, Tom? You look upset."

"There may have been a homicide here. We need your help."

"I know nothing of this, Tom."

"Do you own a rifle?"

"Julia did."

"What kind was it?"

"I don't know for sure. I never fire it myself."

"All right, Emily. You come along with me. They want to ask you some questions down at headquarters."

"You can talk to me right here, young man."

"Sorry. I have to ask you to come with me. Get in the car, Emily."

He went around and held the car door open.

"But I have no wish to leave my home here, Tom."

"Now don't create a fuss. You just come along quiet."

"I am not leaving."

"Now, now, Emily. It'll only be for a little while," he said.

"Well, then, I must take my glasses," I said, and went back inside. Through the window I could see him lean against his car, think better of it, amble over to the porch steps, and come up to the house. He knocked.

"Come in," I said.

He opened the door. I fired Julia's rifle, point-blank, into the middle of him. I used up all the bullets.

I meant to keep Julia's secret safe, and mine, too. She'd never told them I'd shot daddy by accident, and I'll never tell them about her hunters.

With the rifle—I was going to bury it—and food and clothing and blankets, I ran out the back way. I left my glasses and my medications behind. I can return for them any time, because I know hundreds of places in the forest where people will never find me.



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In the Next Issue:

## THE YELLOW DOG MURDER CASE

*The New Complete MIKE SHAYNE Short Novel*

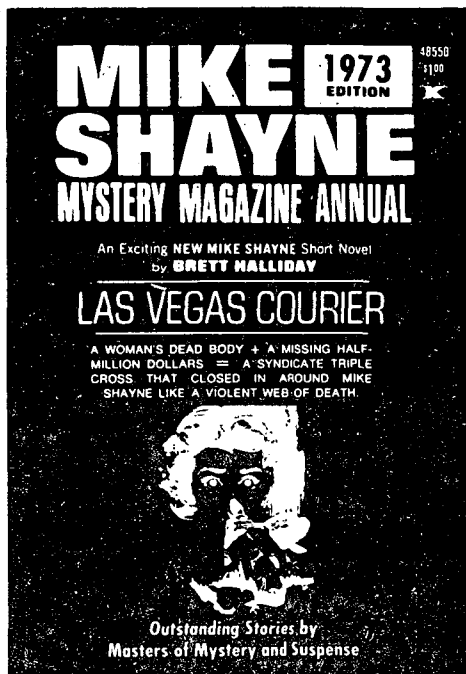
by BRETT HALLIDAY

*Big Tony wasn't too clear about what he wanted from Mike Shayne. But his request of the two goons that followed him was crystal clear. "Let Shayne go for now. But when you see him again, hit him very dead!"*

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NOVEMBER-1973

# A Slice of Pie



*Some bait a mantrap  
with bullets, blondes  
and gold. She just used  
apple pie and a smile.*

by

SYD HOFF

IT WAS JUST a little diner on Route 989W, somewhere between the Dakotas, with a big sign on top that boldly proclaimed, APPLE PIE YOU'LL NEVER FORGET. In the evenings, that sign became illuminated.

"Well, were we exaggerating?" the old man asked customers as they lined up at the cash register to pay their modest checks, hardly ever giving him time to lay down the big knife with which he sliced those pies.

"No, it was the best apple

pie we ever tasted," they invariably answered, and rode off, knowing full well that, as the sign said, they would "never forget."

When there was a lull in the business, which didn't happen often, the old man would step in back to the kitchen and watch his wife baking her pies. He would stand there, proudly, as she went about mixing batter or pulling fresh pies from the oven.

"Another offer from one of those conglomerates," he'd say, holding up a letter. "They want

to build us a whole chain of restaurants, sell your apple pies coast to coast."

"No, we'll stay right here, the way we are," the old lady would say, wiping flour off her hands. "This is where I was born, it's where I want to die. Anyway, I'd rather have customers come back from all over just to have another slice of pie. It's such a nice compliment, don't you think?"

And customers did come back, from the four corners of the country, anyone who had ever traveled on Route 989W and stopped off at the little diner with the sign on top, **APPLE PIE YOU'LL NEVER FORGET.**

The old couple couldn't help acquiring a quantity of cash, but they were so busy working they couldn't get to a bank. They had to keep their savings in a canvas sack right under the counter.

"A little trouble with traveling salesmen, dear. Their wives' clubs are demanding your recipe," said the old man, with another letter. "Seems the boys keep coming back here for more pie even when it's not on their routes; or when the wives try to slip 'em other brands, all kinds of domestic troubles begin. Think we owe it to these women to tell 'em how you do it?"

"No, I hate to hear of there being any troubles in families on my account, but I won't let my apple pie become public domain, not while I'm drawing breath," said the old lady stubbornly, as she rolled more dough. "It's asking little enough that those who enjoy my baking come back and tell me to my face."

The clamor continued. Organizations kept writing; in the name of millions who might never set wheels on Route 989W, they claimed, the conglomerates doubled and tripled their offers; gourmets visited the little diner between the Dakotas and swore that in all the world there had never been a finer culinary masterpiece, a more unforgettable morsel.

The old lady remained adamant. There was even a rumor that she had refused a permanent post in the White House kitchen lest it be interpreted that her apple pies were intended more for one political party than another.

At any rate, she and her husband stayed where they were on Route 989W and business went on as usual. Everyday they made new customers and greeted old ones by their first names.

The old man had less and less time to lay down his knife and handle the cash register, or

go in back and watch his wife in the kitchen.

Early one evening when, miraculously, there were no customers, a car came screeching up outside and a lone gunman entered. "You, come outa there," he barked at the old lady.

She stood trembling alongside her husband, sobbing, "Our money, our money—"

"There, there, dear, don't worry," he whispered.

He learned over, under the counter, and got out the canvas sack. The gunman reached for it, half turned to make his departure.

"Wait, before you go," said the old man, "why don't you try a slice of my wife's apple pie?"

"Yes, please do," the old lady said.

The gunman hesitated. He could savor the tempting aroma of fresh, hot apple pie and his

mouth watered. *These old people must be crazy, he thought. Here I am robbing them of their life's savings and they insist that I eat.*

"Okay, but make it snappy," he said, sitting down on one of the stools and keeping his eyes on the door.

The old man sliced a piece of apple pie and set it down in front of him. The gunman devoured it quickly. Then he grabbed the sack of money and ran out of the place.

In a second his car was back on the highway, racing into the setting sun.

"Quick, call the sheriff!" cried the old lady, still trembling.

"No hurry, my dear," said her husband, feeling the sharp edge of his knife. "Our customers always come back, don't they?"

He turned on the electric sign.



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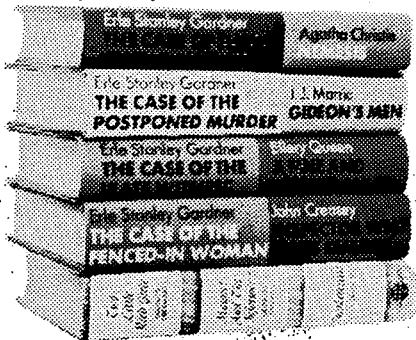
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